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Yoruba Folktales: Cultural Plurality and Oral Narratives

by

Abdul-Rasheed Na'Allah

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Yoruba Folktales: Cultural Plurality and Oral Narratives" submitted by Abdul-Rasheed Na'Allah in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature.

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For my father, Alhaji Ahmad Na'Allah, who passed away on April 10, 1999, few hours after returning to Ilọrin from performing the Hajj in Mecca,

and

for Ilọrin, the multicultural pot.

Abstract

This work argues that Yoruba oral society is a culturally plural society and compares its features to some multicultural patterns of New World societies, using Canada and the United States as examples. The thrust of the thesis is that despite colonial and neo-colonial influences on the Yoruba, the community continues to project a very rich oral tradition, and to retain its distinctive cultural identity. It also argues for major differences between multicultural concepts of an active oral society and the ones often identified in the contemporary Western communities. An active oral society is a society in which orality is still a main part of the cultural, religious, economic and socio-political lives of the majority of the people; while in a passive oral society, otherwise called a written society, writing, and electronics have become the main mediums of communication and formed major sources of cultural dissemination. The thesis discusses the existence of an "open market" for cultural plurality in the active oral society and argues that the multicultural status of the New World society is being sustained by parliamentary legislation and government intervention, thereby often creating social and cultural tensions. Because of the "open market" characteristic of the active oral society of the Yoruba, and because of its inherent cultural plurality, it has created a capacity for itself to sustain its intrinsic identity despite any foreign cultural intervention.

This study introduces a Yoruba rhetorical tool, *Ẹlàlọ̀rọ̀*, as a concept for critical analysis and interpretation, and invites literary critics that are interested in a traditional African critical paradigm to adopt *Ẹlàlọ̀rọ̀*. The use of *Ẹlàlọ̀rọ̀*, which is new to the West, is an expansion on Henry Louis Gates's

(1988) efforts to introduce a pan-Africanist approach of Signifyin(g) to critical discourse. The thesis also utilizes a performance-based approach and engages many contemporary literary debates about Yoruba and related African oral traditions. Using the fieldwork materials collected in Ilọrin in December 1997, the thesis discusses culture and identity in Ilọrin folktales, arguing that despite Ilọrin's contemporary status as a Muslim community, and notwithstanding the influences of Western culture and education on the community, the Ilọrin Yoruba, as an active oral society, continues to project its Yoruba cultural identity.

Finally, the thesis asserts that a **philosophy of indigenizing difference** and the **rhetoric of similarity** are the traditions in which the inherently diverse active oral community of the Yoruba is united. Since the Yoruba culture is inherently diverse, its disparate views, its sub-cultures, and its many religions and worship processes are **united** through emphasis on **(the) similarities** among them. Tension is only logical if a culture as intrinsically plural as Yoruba always beats the drum of differences rather than that of similarities. The thesis thus reviews some of Kwame Anthony Appiah's (1992) comments on notions of African identity and culture, arguing that Appiah deviates from traditional African orality and the latter's consistent emphasis on cultural similarity rather than difference.

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Abdul-Rasheed Na'Allah
April, 1999

Contents

Library Release Form

Title Page

Signed Examination Committee Signature Page

Dedication

Abstract

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Introduction 1

1. Yoruba: The People, Culture and Oral Performances 26

2. Researching Folktales & the Yoruba Inherent Cultural Plurality 57

3. Folktales: The School, the Society, and the Wherewithal of Ilọrin (Yoruba) Active Orality! 96

4. Folktales 126

5. Theorizing on Identity and Culture through Oral Narratives 186

6. Conclusion 211

Footnotes 226

Bibliography 235

Appendix: Summary of collected Folktales 245

Introduction

As the multiculturalism of New World societies continues to grow into the twenty-first century, and the concept of the world as a "global village" continues to form, scholars are intensifying efforts, seeking means to continue to understand the various cultures of the world so as to better relate to peoples from around the world. Many Western scholars, however, continue to interpret other cultures from Western perspectives, and to apply concepts such as multiculturalism to African societies from Western viewpoints, often causing more confusion than clarity, and greater problems than solutions. It is very crucial to have works, such as I have here, to explain other societies, especially those I have described in this work as active oral cultures, in comparison to the passive orality of the contemporary West. This work will discuss the inherent cultural plurality of the Yoruba, and compare it to multicultural concepts of New World societies. It will examine Yoruba (and other African) concepts of identity, similarity, plurality, and diversity, and the different Western (e.g., Canadian and American) concepts of multiculturalism and identity. Its central argument will be that the inherent diversity of Yoruba oral culture equips it with a very strong capacity to absorb new cultural forms without causing tension to the community's intrinsic structure and identity. To argue this thesis, I will present Yoruba origin stories, explore various kinds of Yoruba oral performances, and later use Ilọrin Yoruba identity as a case in point of my discussions. Examples from the New World shall be derived from Canada's, and to some extent, the United States', contemporary multicultural situations. In order to carry readers along carefully through the processes of

understanding why, for example, concepts of multiculturalism or pluralism differ between Yoruba active orality and the Canadian or the United States' written societies, I shall work from an oral historical origin of the Yoruba people and culture, through to a comparison between Yoruba inherent cultural diversity and a few examples of contemporary New World multiculturalisms in Canada and the United States. I shall consider the specific situation of Ilọrin Yoruba identity and how, as an active orality society, it is able to retain its *káàrọ́ òòjiiré* (Yoruba) identity despite extraneous influences. The idea here is to show how, through Yoruba folktales recorded in December 1997 in Ilọrin city, the "faces" of the Ilọrin Yoruba have not altered despite European colonization, Western education, and Islamic and Arabic learning. This work's progressive approach will culminate, at the end, by relating how the plurality features of Yoruba active orality have not been positively explored in resolving the current political upheaval in Nigeria as a whole.

Although several scholars have examined the various aspects of Yoruba oral performances, for example, Ajiboye Babalọla, Ọlaitan Ọlatunji, Wande Abimbọla, Oludare Ọlajubu, and Ropo Sekoni, this study shall be the first to use Yoruba oral narratives to discuss issues of inherent cultural plurality among the Yoruba, and compare such important characteristics of an African "active oral society" to contemporary Western multiculturalism. It will be my expectation that this study can show Yoruba elite, and indeed Nigerian society and the Western world, how contemporary societies can benefit from Yoruba intrinsic cultural plurality in ensuring peace, progress, and prosperity in the twenty-first century and avoiding the current socio-political turmoil which recently almost destroyed the Nigerian nation (for insight into the Nigerian crises, see Na'Allah 1998; Soyinka 1996).

What methodology will I adopt in analyzing oral culture? Vladimir Propp's morphology? Jakobson's or Levi-Strauss's structuralisms? Freud's or Jung's psychoanalysis? Even-Zohar's polysystem? Or should I go for the New Criticism, Marxism, Postmarxism, Postmodernism? This is the paradox of this project! I am making a case for the primacy of orality in written form. I have to follow the requirements of the written English grammar, its regularly irregular morphological-cum-phono-syntactic structures, and then quote European theories to defend African oral culture. No! I am a drummer, a bard, a traditional storyteller; my paths are already cleared, my songs must be performed according to the rhythm of my people's game. The Yoruba say, *ká se bí wón tíí se, kólè báà rí bíí tíí rí*, meaning that we should do our performance according to the tradition of our lineage so that it can attain the success that it is meant to attain. While benefiting from some contemporary Western polemics, this work will primarily adopt the performance-centered approach, and invoke *Ẹlà l'ọ̀rọ̀*, a Yoruba rhetorical concept which combines theory with practice, as its guiding spirit.

The performance-based approach will be used to demonstrate how Yoruba folktales can be appreciated within the scope of actual performance where contextualizations play important roles in determining the meaning and socio-cultural essence of the tales. Several scholars of African oral traditions, Ruth Finnegan (1970), Isidore Okpewho (1990, 1992), Ropo Sekoni (1990), have emphasized the importance of performance in the identification, appreciation and analysis of African oral tales. Okpewho, in an interview, defines the performance-based approach as follows:

> The performance-based approach to the study of oral literature asks questions beyond what we can see on the printed page. Although in some instances what you see on the printed page helps to reconfigure what could have been the

> circumstances under which certain things that happen in the text behave the way they do, if you did not collect the material yourself. Against what background can we, for instance, look at certain structural or plot related aspect of the story, or stylistic aspect of the story? When you see anything that looks rather interesting, you wonder against what background they were done. That is when you begin to ask questions about the circumstances from which the tales were derived. So the performance-based approach shows a very strong interest in circumstances beyond the readable text... (Na'Allah 1997a: 13-14)

As already stated, most of the tales I shall discuss in this work were recorded on video during live performances in Ilọrin. Although video documentation cannot replace the actual life event, it is the best way contemporary technology has provided to keep life events recorded for future replay. The advantage of this technology is that it is possible to recall most of the events which happened in the past. It is better than the printed page because the actual performance can be replayed, seen again and analyzed. In other words, video keeps the 'life' of the performance and re-lives it for our convenience, showing us the place, people, and movements of the actual performances. The audio-video recording is better than audio recording because we can only experience the voices on audio, and are not be able to describe the actual actions.

Whereas the video technology continues to be the best device to preserve an oral performance for the contemporary oral scholar, it has a number of shortcomings. Experiences have shown that the video can be doctored to give false accounts rather than the actual past life-events. [1] Such terminology as video or film tricks and special effects have made it necessary for the oral researcher to ensure that the recording is authentic, and to take extra care that it is not available to video adulteration. Another shortcoming of the video is that it cannot reproduce the spontaneity of the

actual events. In the oral world, no two performances are the same, and a re-play of exactly the same events may misrepresent the true characteristics of oral performance. I have argued in another paper for "participatory performance" in understanding African oral forms, and I remain strongly convinced that, useful though video is, the teacher of African orality must be careful not to neglect the need for actual participation in oral events through passive watching of recorded videos (see Na'Allah 1997b: 125-42).

Finally I will derive some folktales from my personal reservoir as a storyteller. I have grown up participating fully in Yoruba folktale sessions in Ilọrin. Also as an elementary school teacher between 1981 and 1984, I conducted folktale sessions in grades 4, 5 and 6. I consider myself to be a working reservoir of Yoruba folktales, as I expect any person who grew up among the Yoruba and has experiences similar to mine would be. I am using this method to further strengthen my contention later that the researcher is a source in this work, and to continue the argument for the right of a writer to become a source in the research of oral performance in his indigenous upbringing.

The video materials come from two important settings in Ilọrin: the school and the home. In my view, the two represent the entirety of the socio-cultural realities of contemporary Ilọrin. The school is preoccupied with imparting Western arts, science and technology to the young people, and hopes to perfect the student's abilities in the written culture. The home, on the other hand, is a representation of African orality at its root. The parents, the grandparents, and the children are all performers at home, and the whole act of passing the oral form from one generation to another takes place mainly at home. This is not to belittle the importance of the village center, the market, the farm, the palace, and all the local singers and other

traditional oral performers. But as Yoruba will say, *Ilé látí n kó èṣọ r'òde*, meaning that it is from the home that we beautify/prepare ourselves for outside engagement; or *Ilé là ń wò ká tó s'ọ́mọ́ l'órúkọ́*, it is the situation at home or its nature that determines what name a child is given. There is also another adage, that *Ilé l'àbọ̀ símí ókó*, meaning that home is the return after the journey abroad. In other words, home, to the Yoruba, is a crucial point of cultural education. Folktales are not only told under the moonlight at home in Ilọrin: in all the elementary schools in the community classroom, periods are set aside for folktales, where the teacher and the pupils compete for the best performed tales in class. In all the Ilọrin High schools, folktales are told and discussed during Yoruba lessons inasmuch as Yoruba, like French, Geography, and Mathematics, is a subject on the school timetable. In some schools, there are clubs and societies that concern themselves with issues of Yoruba culture. Usually most club members are also students of Yoruba language and culture and want to follow up their emotional attachment to Yoruba culture with an active involvement in activities promoting it. My intention for producing folktale performances in Chapter 4 is not for consideration of, or theorizing on, their performance techniques (though performance is at the center of all the cogent points I intend to discuss here) but as a continuation of a thread started in Chapter 2 on cultural issues in active orality societies, and how the inherent cultural plurality of Yoruba has helped Ilọrin to foster multilingualism and multiculturalism without the usual tension that one often observes in contemporary Western multicultural societies.

One question I have asked myself regarding the use of folktales in a discussion of Yoruba poetics is "Why folktales?" Why not oral poetry or ritual performances, or some other oral creative genres which abound

among the Yoruba? Indeed, in this work I will actively explore many types of African oral performances, poetry, proverbs and adages, and will cite from oral legends and historical analyses. Yet, I cannot find another oral form, besides the folktale, in which every Yoruba can claim to be a potential expert. Folktales are truly communal performances because they are told by the elder to the young, or sometimes vice versa, or by the young among themselves, and I am very eager in this work to examine issues that are popular among the Yoruba. Furthermore, every Yoruba folktale session a total theater--there are mime, songs, music, dance, dialogue, and occasionally costumes. Language use is often at its richest. Repetition, onomatopoeia, other metaphorical formations, and traditional wisdom are basic components of Yoruba tales. I said to myself, "If the folktale were not an important tool for teaching, discussing and understanding culture, the Yoruba would not have selected it as a major form of teaching their young ones morality and culture." As I continue my analyses in this work, I will justify further the use of folktale performance to enriched this work.

Ẹlàl'ọ̀rọ̀, largely new in the discussion of oral narratives in the West, will serve as a useful critical strategy for African Diaspora and critical minds the world over. Indeed, as a performer of African orality my activity here is in accordance with the intellectual game in Yoruba (African) oral tradition--what Kwame Appiah (1992: 86) describes as the "earlier preliterate forms of intellectual activity." For as Walter Ong correctly suggests, the oral performers are truly intellectuals (1982: 36). My language and metaphor come from what, through my upbringing and later years of research, I have come to know as the Yoruba's rhetorical strategy. But how far can a researcher of African oral literature go in asserting his[2] knowledge of the oral society, or better put, what qualifies him as a primary source of African

oral material? Or better still, what requirements must he satisfy in order to assert himself as a performer of African orality? Is he qualified to adequately translate into English (or whatever foreign language he uses) ideas from African oral culture? I will address the last question first.

According to Finnegan, it is more difficult when a person has to translate from an oral to a written source. She explains: "With oral forms *two* translation processes have to be undertaken: not only from one language to another, but also from an oral to a written mode" (1992: 191). Finnegan has one requirement for a would be translator: "[he] must fulfill obligations such as a reasonable command of both original and target language, including knowledge not just of vocabulary but of grammatical and syntactical structures, of differing registers, and of language usage generally" (p. 190). I believe I have been able to fulfill these obligations. I acquired Yoruba as my first language and English as a third or fourth language, having spoken Hausa, and later memorized and eventually learned to read the Arabic Qur'an before the English. But the situation with my first language is also interesting. Although my father speaks both Hausa and Yoruba, my mother[3] only knows a few words of Hausa, and speaks mainly Yoruba. In my early years therefore, in Ilọrin and Kano where I lived with my parents, I was exposed to both languages, but had more opportunity to speak Yoruba than Hausa. My cousins who lived with us when I was a child, Asimi and Abdul-Razaq, also spoke both languages, and both would certainly have spoken to me. This situation is not at all strange in Ilọrin where it is possible to have, in the same household, people of three or more language ancestries, e.g. Yoruba, Hausa, Nupe, and Baruba. Although all of them speak fluent Yoruba, some speak some Hausa, and others speak hardly any other of the languages. I started learning Arabic (which I only know barely) before I was

exposed to English. However, from 1981 to the present I have written and spoken more in Yoruba and English than I have in Hausa, and I often wonder in which language, Hausa or Yoruba, I can perform better as a speaker.

Whenever I speak Yoruba, I have often found that I am "completely" Yoruba, and when I speak Hausa, "completely" Hausa in my manner, my word use, and my cultural disposition, regardless of the clothes in which I dress up. This situation is very similar to what sociolinguists call code switching, except that here I am referring to different occasions respectively (in time and possibly space) when the different language is used extensively by the multilinguist, and not a switching of the different codes during a single speech making. This may have occurred to many more people who are in the same situation as myself, that is, those who not only speak more than one language, but who also grow up from their earliest lives simultaneously acquiring those languages and cultures. I often find that because I grew up as a speaker of these two languages, a speech in either Hausa or Yoruba triggers a feeling of cultural attachment and identification with the respective language. I call this situation the culture alignment syndrome in a multilingual situation. Further research may be necessary to prove whether this feeling is authentic, and whether it is possible for such a feeling to be influenced by circumstances outside the nature of language and cultural acquisition.

I do not have the same attachment to English each time I speak it, possibly because I began to speak English late in my elementary schooling. I started to communicate meaningfully in English during my sixth year of elementary school, and to me the English language has been a "sweet burden" in all of my post-elementary and tertiary institutions. In other

words, though I enjoy speaking it, English does not come naturally to me in any way, and even now, I am always conscious that I am speaking in a foreign tongue whenever I use English. Rather than working to bring my English to the level of a British or an American native speaker (here I refer more to the use of words and the construction of sentences than the pronunciation of the language), I have found myself forcing English to adapt to my own cultural and linguistic backgrounds. There may be two possible reasons for this development. The first is that I did not acquire the English culture with the English language, and so the stronger cultures in my consciousness (and unconscious) are Yoruba and Hausa, and thus they automatically play a role whenever I use English, Pidgin English, or Arabic. This situation resembles what Lado's MT transfer theory (1957) poses regarding language learning, where elements in the first language become a Trojan Horse in a person's second language learning. The second reason is that I have lived for about thirty-two years in active orality societies, and have been accustomed to being involved in the marketplace, the village center, the town meetings, the naming, marriage, and burial ceremonies, the blacksmith's shop, the yearly cultural festivals, and have listened most of the time to folktales, oral songs, and ritual dramatic performances. I have observed, listened to, and actively participated in, an *Ẹlà l'ọ̀rọ̀*, and I am already a player in the juicy rhetoric of the Yoruba. I have even seen many Yoruba cultural forms that I have never performed done numerous times and understood them inside out. I have already formed all these lifetime memories so that I explore them effortlessly whenever I need them. I am a tree shaped when I was young, and I have dried under the sun of age. Any effort to re-shape me will only break me. My position in this analysis is that I am only a metaphor for persons in many active orality societies of the

world who, on the eve of the twenty-first century, are forced to use high-tech languages such as English. Perhaps, like me, if their indigenous cultures had not been active orality cultures, and if they had grown up in contemporary, largely passive orality societies such as England, United States and Canada, their attitudes to, and cultural involvement with, English would be different. In other words, we all would have "aligned" with English whenever we speak English, and not brought our Yoruba or Hausa to bear on our English.

Is the situation of the African Americans who speak Ebonics similar to mine? Do they bring another culture to bear on Standard English? I ask these questions because the situation of African Americans is much different from mine, I being from an oral culture of Nigeria and they from either the "written" or "oral" culture of America. In my opinion, the single answer to both questions is "Yes". Most African Americans live in an active orality sub-society within a written or high-tech American society--what I choose to call the black neighborhood (see Abrahams 1970; Jackson 1974)--and they largely bring the oral experience of their up-bringing as background to speaking standard English. I am in no way equating the active orality of the black neighborhood to that of contemporary Yoruba, but it is clear that many African American children do not have the opportunity to attend schools, and a notable percentage of those who do have to drop out of school because of the disadvantages inherent in being black in America. I would not be surprised if, like the black ghettos in apartheid South Africa, there are some black neighborhoods in 2000 America without schools. Frederick Douglas's (1995: 40-55) suffering experiences, while trying to acquire writing and reading skills are, in my view, still similar to what some African Americans go through in contemporary America in their efforts to acquire a Western

education. In other words, it would not be wrong to say that many African Americans can only boast of oral cultural background from the ghettos, even in most technologically advanced nation.

How do I define an active orality society as opposed to a passive orality one? Active orality is wherever writing is non-existent, or even if it exists only serves a tiny minority of the population, who, from most indications, do not contribute to the socio-cultural life of the majority. The issue of the active orality status is not solely determined by economic well-being of the population, as a population that is rich and self-sufficient may choose to have little to do with writing. In any case, more often than not, the majority of active orality societies in contemporary Africa live in economic poverty, although they are extremely rich in culture and language.

As I have argued in a paper entitled "The Arabic Influence on Yoruba and Hausa Writing Traditions in Nigeria," the concept of writing is not foreign to Yoruba or to many other language groups in Nigeria. The Yoruba have many traditional inscripted signs that are considered writing symbols and are used to encode thoughts. However, the traditional Yoruba writing system is very limited, and is explored mainly during religious practices such as the *Ifá* divination (it is interesting that the concept of *Ẹlà l'ọ̀rọ̀*, also has some connection to *Ifá*, as we shall discuss later).

The oral form is the active form of communication for people in an active orality society, in which the traditional laws and norms are considered, composed, and conveyed orally. The major form of education among the majority of the populace is informal and oral, and the mass of the community expresses most of their belief system, their daily socio-economic life such as marriage, naming, burial, inheritance, worship, household governance, and trade orally, from the composition to the practical

performance of all of these elements. Although the Yoruba today, like the Igbo, Ijo, Ibibio, Hausa, and many other language groups in Nigeria, have a long history of contact with Western literacy, and in some cases even with the Arabic writing system, the largest populations of people in these language groups are neither literate nor envision themselves ever using writing for anything meaningful in their lives.

In the passive orality societies of the New World, however, virtually everything depends on the writing form, and even when we consider the ever increasing dependency on electronics, writing becomes even more crucial as computer systems are almost entirely vitalized through writing codes. I have heard people point out the new evolution in the computer technology in which oral speech fed into a computer generates writing codes, as well as point out radio, television, and even the telephone, and my response to them is that apart from the fact that these forms depend on a huge economic investment, the kind that is practically unattainable by the majority of the population of an active orality society (and this does not undermine my earlier assertion that active oraliy society is not constructed upon the economic well-being of its population), all of these electronic forms are built upon writing in one form or another, and basic literacy skills are necessary to operate them. Both Ong and Zumthor have tried to give their own classifications of societies based on their oral involvement. Ong (1982), for example, identifies a primary orality, a secondary oral society, and seems to suggest a tertiary oral society as the technological society. I have a problem with Ong's idea that primary orality status, where no one is influenced by writing in any way, is unattainable, and therefore non-existent. My first reaction was that Ong was talking of the orality society of the North American native Indians, and perhaps of those I had referred to as

Black Americans living in Black neighborhoods. I know that writing systems have penetrated many spheres of African, Nigerian and Yoruba lives, and for example, elementary schools can be found even in some very remote areas of Nigeria, but I insist that there are still many generations of Africans whose lives are never touched by writing, just as there are thousands of languages in Africa, and many of them in Nigeria, that have never been written and have no orthography. However, my definition of the active and passive orality status, as the names imply, does not refer either to a total absence or presence of writing form, but rather indicates the degree of a community's engagement with each of these two systems. Although the Yoruba today may have one of its sons as a Nobel laureate in written literature in the person of the playwright Wole Soyinka, and the Yoruba perhaps have the highest population of Western literate people in Nigerian (as different from Arabic literacy), I am confident in saying that the largest population of Yoruba people have no writing skills, and cannot read the kind of literature that earned Soyinka the Nobel prize, and perhaps more than 90% of the entire Yoruba population can neither read nor write any literature at all. Conversely in the contemporary Wes[illegible]lthough many people may have a low level of literacy education, it is impossible to say that majority of Western people can neither read nor write!

As an oral literary researcher, I regard language as both expression and action. I need to translate not only the linguistic elements but also the culture and the paralinguistic features of oral performance. In this work, I will adopt both "free" and "literal" methods of translation depending on the circumstances of the word or concept to be translated. I shall also feel free to retain some cultural words in their original forms if I consider it impossible to obtain equivalent words in the target language or if I think they serve a

particular aesthetic and/or cultural or theoretical purpose that requires their retention in either Yoruba or English.

The researcher of African oral literature who himself is born and raised in an African oral community is clearly qualified to assert his knowledge and experiences to enrich his discussion of African orality. In other words, he, having lived the oral life, is qualified to be a primary source, an interpreter, and a translator of the oral materials of his oral culture. When such a researcher discusses his home culture, he is discussing his own life experiences. This is no less authentic than the confidence contemporary African writers of novels, dramas, and poetry have in discussing their cultures in their creative work, as Wole Soyinka does regarding a Yoruba Kingdom in *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975), and Chinua Achebe regarding the Igbo world in *Things Fall Apart* (1958). Kwame Anthony Appiah, in his seminal text, *In My Father's House* (1992), says he is partially performing his own life in his book, citing profusely from his own past and contemporary family experiences. His argument for a de-racialized Pan-Africanism in the book, he says, derives from the life he himself saw his father live:

> My Father is my model for the possibility of a Pan-Africanism without racism, both in Africa and in its diaspora--a concrete possibility whose conceptual implications this book is partially to explore. (p. ix)

Despite such cogent arguments by many African scholars, including Appiah, about the level of Westernization of Africa and Africans, especially south of the Sahara, I have heard assertions about how much African identity, e.g. Yoruba, Hausa, etc., has changed since colonization, and how Africans can no longer claim their original oral culture, let alone resume the position of

an expert of it. [4] One of Kwame Appiah's comments is pertinent in rejecting such claims as one of the evidences of the colonialists' stark ignorance about the colonial--past and present--African realities:

> If we read Soyinka's own *Aké*, a childhood autobiography of an upbringing in prewar colonial Nigeria--or the more explicitly fictionalized narratives of his countrymen, Chinua Achebe--we shall be powerfully informed of the ways in which even those children who were extracted from the traditional culture of their parents and grandparents and thrust into the colonial school were never fully enmeshed in a primary experience of their own traditions. The same clear sense shines through the romanticizing haze of Camara Laye's *L'Enfant noir*. To insist in these circumstances on the alienation of (Western-) educated colonials, on their incapacity to appreciate and value their own traditions, is to risk mistaking both the power of this primary experience and the vigour of many forms of cultural resistance to colonialism. A sense that the colonizers overrate the extent of their cultural penetration is consistent with anger or hatred or longing for freedom, but it does not entail the failures of self-confidence that lead to alienation (p. 7).

The truth is that European colonization never changed the principal oral reality of much of Africa, including the Yoruba culture of Nigeria. In villages and towns, especially around Ilọrin Yoruba community, a large percentage of children do not go to the Western school and thus have no access to Western formal education(there is, of course, a claim in some quarters that Yoruba nations combined as a literacy rate of about 50%). The rural Yoruba areas especially (without excluding the urban ones) continue to flourish in the oral tradition which Appiah describes as "our own cognitive and moral traditions: in religion, in such social occasions as the funeral, in our experience of music, in our practice of the dance, and, of course, in the intimacy of family life" (pp. 7-8). And this is so even if one is a Muslim or Christian (though I must emphasize that my own understanding of being a

Muslim is not antagonistic to being a traditional African cultured person (see my paper "Is *Al-Mukhlit* a Critically Useful Term for the Islamic Features in African Literature?"). I myself spent more than thirty years of my life in urban, semi-urban and highly rural areas in Nigeria,[5] and, far more than the type of Africans that Appiah described as "(Western-) educated colonials" (p. 7), I consider myself an oral cultured person, and enjoy the "inherent pluri-cultural" reality of all the oral traditions of my upbringing.

Yai (1989; see also Finnegan 1992: 192-193) has some hints for oral researchers which I consider very pragmatic and highly relevant to this study. The following are Yai's recommendations as quoted by Finnegan:

> 1. "The translator must first be immersed in the culture of the source language. No attempt to translate with the aid of special dictionaries can help in oral translation, as the putative translator must have 'lived' oral performances in the source culture."
> 2. "The second step is the search for viable and orally acceptable equivalent forms in the target language."
> 3. "Extensive experimentation in oral rendition is required, with a written text as an optional visual aid."
> 4. "The performance is nonmediated."
>
> (qtd in Finnegan 1992: 192).

Finnegan however adds:

> He [Yai] eliminates the aim of a final rendition in writing, going on to add that if the original performance allowed improvisation then it should similarly be open to the translator-performer to 'add "lines" of his/her own making to the "text" which is never closed, once he/she is inspired by the mood or muse of the genre' (p. 193; see also Yai 1989: 69).

I identify with Yai's points and, from experience, whenever I write about my oral culture I am constantly "inspired by the mood or muse of the genre."

This work will not be different as I shall freely (I have used this word, "free", many times) utilize all the oral forms that the "mood and the muse" inspired me to compose and perform as I write this thesis. That is why I have described this work from the outset as a "performance thesis".

Now a return to *Ẹlà l'ọ̀rọ̀*. My intention here, while treading on a new path, is to show that more can come from where Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (1988) draws his Signifyin(g) theory--without necessarily asking for repetitions, tropes, or reversion--as a means of explaining and understanding literary creativity and revision. The theory of the Signifyin(g), rooted in pan-African oral narrative of the signifying monkey, found to be "the profane counterpart of Ẹ̀ṣu-Ẹlẹ́gbara, the Yoruba sacred trickster" (quoted in *Cultural Studies*, p. 132), is only one of the many oral strategies through which critics are able to claim indigenous theoretical tools from the African oral culture. Readers can, therefore, learn to invoke the concept of *Ẹlà l'ọ̀rọ̀* as a tool to understanding the rhetoric and critical approaches in any contemporary African and African American writing which derive their heritage from Yoruba oral tradition. It should also be possible, in my view, for any writer looking for an indigenous critical oral heritage from Africa to explore *Ẹlà l'ọ̀rọ̀* as a way of giving his critical approach a genuine touch of African orality tradition.

Whenever Yoruba critical minds--elderly and young minds of the community-- gather around their art, they invoke some Yoruba critical approaches, calling for textual performances and for the explications of such performances according to indigenous rhetorical principles. What exactly does *Ẹlà l'ọ̀rọ̀* mean? The following sample performance shows how the Yoruba employ this critical tool:

Asabi:	B'ẹ baje n wi e o gbọrọ ẹnu mi, ai je n wi maa f'ẹdọ mi l'ori ororo
Adebisi:	Saawo!
Asabi:	Ẹni taa fẹ l'amọ a o m'ẹni t'ofẹni de'nu. Ẹni a ni o f'ẹni l'oju t'ofi ata s'ẹnu
Adebisi:	Kayefi!
Asabi:	T'oba r'aja ti o ru ina l'ori, awon ara ile rẹ se agbako
Adebisi:	Ẹlà l'ọrọ; ọrọ kiile kokoko k'ayọbẹ tii

Asabi:	If you allow me to talk, you'll hear words from my mouth, if you refuse to let me talk I'll leave my liver to rest (gently) on my pancreas.
Adebisi:	Say it, let's see (hear, examine) it!
Asabi:	We only know the person we love, not the one who loves us from the bottom of his heart. The person we requested to fan our eyes had put pepper in his mouth!
Adebisi:	Awe!
Asabi:	If you see a dog carrying fire on its head, (know that) its "friends" are in real trouble.
Adebisi:	*Ẹlà l'ọrọ*! A word (speech) does not become so difficult for us to bring a knife upon it.[6]

Ẹlà l'ọrọ!: the call for examination, explanations and for criticism. From the above performance, Adebisi, or another listener, may invoke *Ẹlà l'ọrọ*, asking the narrator to break her parable into pieces. But he, as co-conversant, may pronounce it and then invite an outsider to do the job, or he himself may invoke *Ẹlà l'ọrọ* and engage in a reexamination or critical rephrasing of the narrative for a better understanding. An outsider to the conversation, e.g., a passer-by may declare *Ẹlà l'ọrọ* and go on to examine the wordings of the literary performance, or the narrator herself may declare it to show that she intends to break her heavily idiomatic textual performance into clearer pieces. In short, *Ẹlà l'ọrọ* is a call for a closer and

more critical examination and understanding of a speech, poetic or ordinary, through recasting, re-presentation, or re-phrasing in simpler but equally rich words; *Ẹlà l'ọ̀rọ̀* is to conduct a surgical operation on a speech, using community wisdom which resides in proverbs, adages, and metaphors, while remaining unafraid to be critically imaginative and innovative. Literally, the phrase means, "cutting [the] speech [into pieces]", "speech to be cut" or "speech for [surgical] operation": the cutting or operating being of the kind one does with a knife or sharp object. The first word of the phrase, *Ẹlà*, is another name of the Yoruba god of divination, *Ifá* (Olokun n.d., p. 5). *Ifá* possesses the power to see the past, the present, and the future, and is consulted, through the *Ifá* priest, by people who want to inquire about matters which are confusing them (see Abimbọla 1977). From the impressions she gathered researching Yoruba gods, Judith Gleason rightly describes the deity *Ifá* as an "embodiment of knowledge" (Gleason 1971: 3). It may be said, therefore, that *Ẹlà l'ọ̀rọ̀* has both literary and spiritual significances.

When I read Niyi Ọ̀ṣundare's "How Post-Colonial is African Literature?" (1994), I thought the Yoruba rhetorist in him got a stronger hold of him by the way he beautifully summarized his disappointment in Conrad's contemporary Western critics:

> I was expecting poststructuralist **open surgery** on Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, but what I got is a complex series of evasions, open-eyed blindness, willful forgetfulness, or simply, intellectual and racial connivance with the European novelist. (p. 210) (my emphasis)

Although Ọ̀ṣundare might not have intended it, when I replace "open surgery" with *Ẹlà l'ọ̀rọ̀*, and omit "poststructuralist", what remains is a

striking definition of *Ẹlà l'ọ̀rọ̀* and the expectations of its critical processes through what they are not: no evasions, no open-eyed blindness, no willful forgetfulness, no intellectual and racial connivance with the author or performer of the original speech, or in the case to which Ọ̀ṣundare refers above, the written text. We shall come to the issue of "race" later in this work, and invoking *Ẹ̀là l'ọ̀rọ̀*, (meaning also, "words are for perusing"), I intend *lá ti làá kó báà lée yé yángá yángá* (forgive my codeswitching), meaning "to explain or discuss it so as to make it undoubtedly clear." The question is whether the critic can be biased in favor of a writer from his race or sociopolitical or economic group. In short, does this concept ask for a de-personalized, unbiased criticism, unlike what Ọ̀ṣundare (pp. 209-16) claims to have read from Rose Murfin's, Adena Rosemarin's, and Brook Thomas's criticisms of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*? *Ẹlà l'ọ̀rọ̀* means a speech to be or capable of being operated upon or cut into pieces. *Ẹlà* refers to what to cut, or the process of cutting, and *ọ̀rọ̀* to word(s) or speech. *Ọ̀rọ̀* here may be compared to a person taken to an operating theater: not because that person is unwell, or because the doctor wants to destroy parts of his biological system, but because the surgeon wants to learn from and further appreciate the person's physiology, or wants to help other people to understand it by critically analyzing his makeup. The idea of *là*, "operating" or "cutting", in Yoruba rhetoric is very central to the critical process. There is also a Yoruba sentence, *ọ̀na la*, the route/way is clear, giving *là*, the meaning, "clear," and, *ó là kédéré*, "it is crystal clear," or óju ọ́jọ́ là kédéré, "the day is very clear (today)!" Therefore, when a Yoruba person says, *ọ̀rọ̀ là*, he asks for a word or speech to be clear to him, or *ọ̀nà là*, that the road to take, or choice to make, or just any unclear issue be clear to him! The Yoruba critic/rhetoricist is also interested in the beauty of performance wordings. The speaker or performer

seizes opportunity to be rhetorical, as we shall come to appreciate better later in this work. The uncompressed rendition of the invocation of *Ẹlàlọ̀rọ̀* will be *Ẹ̀là ní ọ̀rọ̀;* however, it is highly common to hear any performer say it without the play on the lateral /l/ sound, often used in Yoruba as a substitute for /n/, thus: *Ẹlà l'ọ̀rọ̀. Ẹ̀là,* when used for *Ifá,* is an invocation of the power of the Yoruba god to make clear to a person or people what has become unclear to them.

The Yoruba often say that *Ọ̀rọ̀ kìi lé kókókó ka yọ́ ọ̀bẹ́ tìì. Ẹnú náà láá fí sọ* meaning that "a speech cannot be so hard to make us bring a knife upon it, we use the mouth to explain it." However this particular dictum does not negate *Ẹ̀là l'ọ̀rọ̀* as the reference to knife here refers to conflict or disagreement between two or more parties and the idea that dialogue is the most viable way to resolve such conflicts. Further, in Yoruba rhetorics, it is said that *ẹ́ní t'óbá beerè ọ̀rọ̀ l'ófẹ́ ìdíẹ̀ gbọ́,* meaning that whoever asks question(s) (about anything, a word or speech, etc.) desires to hear about the essence or root of it. In other words, a critic is required (and often the narrator puts this burden upon himself) to present "the root of the issue" to the questioner. The Yoruba believe that criticism can be positive or negative, and can be said either harshly or diplomatically, and the Ọyọ Yoruba are counted among the most diplomatic groups in the Yoruba world. In other words, in Yoruba rhetoric, there is a theory that *ọ̀rọ̀ níí yọ́ óbì l'ápò; ọ̀rọ̀ níí yọ́ ófà nínú ápó ...*[7] meaning that "speech may be said such that it either draws a kolanut from the pocket, or a bow and arrow from the case ..." (notice the play on the word, *apo*).

In Chapter 1, I will give a general overview of the history, culture, and oral performances of the Yoruba. This is necessary in order to establish from the beginning of the work who the Yoruba are, and how they see

themselves in their oral culture. Chapter 2 will discuss the inherent cultural plurality among the Yoruba and critically compare it with the contemporary multiculturalism of New World society. My intention in the chapter will be to show the differences between cultural plurality in the Yoruba oral culture and the concept of multiculturalism in the written world. Chapter 3 will explain the history and culture of Yoruba Ilọrin, explain the circumstances concerning the collection of folktales in Ilọrin for this work, and review some interesting theoretical discussions on folktale narration and oral transcriptions. The main objective of this chapter will be to show that if an oral researcher knows and respects an oral culture, and if he is faithful to the oral material he collects in the field, he will be able to collect and transcribe materials from an active orality culture such as Ilọrin which establish a particular identity of the community. In Chapter 4 I shall provide the collected folktales data in English translation. Although this chapter contains mainly transcribed folktale rather than a series of arguments and critical judgements, it is not isolated from the others. The reader must "read" it, and must be involved in it just as he is in other chapters in order for him to get the best out of the chapter. Every performer's actual name is provided, and the reader is expected to read as if he himself is participating in the actual oral performance. The import of this chapter is in showing the intention for this work to deviate to some extent from a conventional written form. For example, I could easily make the transcribed material an appendix to this work, but that would defeat the purpose of showing orality as both theory and practice capable of living in its actual form while engaging in critical polemics. To transfer the transcribed folktales to the appendix can hide the paradox in making a written case for the primacy of orality. It would admit to a secondary status for the oral materials. Chapter 4 will afford the reader

to become, to some degree, a participant in the folktale session. As he moves from performer to performer, song to song and narration to narration, he is able to enter into the world of the folktale session, and therefore continues to identify several elements of Yoruba culture discussed in the previous chapters. He will be able to see evidence of how a multicultural and multilingual Ilọrin oral culture portrays its Yoruba identity within the reality of its plurality. I strongly believe that in order to help the experiment of introducing the reader to the orality world and allow him to see if he can function from within "a transcribed performance," he must be induced to make his own critical calculations from the folktale performances into which he is brought. It is important to emphasize that our method here must not be seen as intended to affect the reader's ability to derive critical understanding from this work, or to curtail the flow of the reading. The reader is afforded an opportunity to be a critic from within an audienceship of the actual performance, from his "participation" in the performance that Chapter 4 afforded him. Chapter 5 will continue the argumentation about how the folktales explain issues of identity and culture of the Ilọrin Yoruba. My intention here is not to present a structuralist or formalist analysis of folktales. This chapter argues that Ilọrin Yoruba retains its culture and identity despite foreign forces around it. It relates a few elements of the Ilọrin folktales to some features in folktales around the world, including some African-American folktales, and explains that despite universal parallels in some of them many features are unique to the Yoruba tales. This work emphasizes a performance-based approach, instead of a formalist or structuralist analysis of the so-called function of dramatis personae (pace Vladimir Propp and Claude Lévi-Strauss), or a post-structuralist paradigm, even though it may, one way or the other, benefit from some of their critical

insights. Chapter 4 will complete this work by summarily foregrounding the points of inherent cultural plurality in active orality society that are made in previous chapters, and by relating them to contemporary socio-political events in Nigeria. Specifically this chapter will argue that many contemporary Yoruba elite, despite their cultural upbringing, have failed to allow cultural ethics taught through Yoruba folktales to reflect their attitudes to their fellow Yoruba and Nigerians.

Chapter 1

Yoruba: The People, Culture and Oral Performances

"When Elephant dances in the African forest, the spirits of the forest, the trees, the birds who fly around providing sonorous voices and juicy music to the dance already know who Elephant is"! I heard similar words sang so melodiously to me in Yoruba by an Ilọrin freelance poet just before I left home for overseas in 1994. He sang that the birds' voices will not be as titillating, that the dance will be awkward, and that Elephant will miss his steps if those who compose his music would not use his lineage names. Elephant, meaning *Erín* in Yoruba, is a praise name of his patron, *Erín jógún ọ́lá*, Elephant inherits royal vibrancy! My preoccupation in this chapter is like that of the birds in the Elephant's forest. I cannot enhance the dancing steps of my Yoruba cultural plurality theory without showing how well my songs know Yoruba's praise names. This chapter must spell out the background of the meaning, origin, and cultural structure of Yoruba so that when its Elephant dances, all visitor audiences and members of the household will not need a soothsayer to interpret its steps. Says a Yoruba adage: *t'ábá ní árí érín, 'ámà pé árí érín, àjànakú kúrò ni mó ri ìrù kán firi* meaning that "when we acknowledge seeing an Elephant, we know that we've seen an Elephant, as the mighty animal cannot be described as, 'a tiny tail that flipped by'." Through several available written sources, oral stories, and performances in prose and poetry, this chapter intends to establish the historical origin of the Yoruba nation and offer background information about its inherent cultural plurality. I shall show how, despite colonization

and contemporary neo-colonial cultural influences in Nigeria, the Yoruba culture retains its identity, and through its continued vibrancy, helps the Yoruba people, regardless of the differences among them, to define their Yorubaness.

As far back as 1980 writing his famous book, *The Yoruba Today*, J. S. Eades confessed to the following:

> Writing a general book about the Yoruba is a foolhardy enterprise, a fact which is clearer to me now than when I began it. There are two main problems. The first is the sheer mass of material available: the Baldwins' bibliography (1976) has nearly 3500 references, to which I could add a few hundred more. (p. ix)

As I am writing almost two decades after Eades made this statement, it will be an impossible task to cover in this work all that has been said and written about the Yoruba to date. Yoruba are certainly in my view, a sophisticated language group in Africa, and not just because a Yoruba writer exploring the language and mythology of his people was the first African to win the Nobel prize in literature, but also because Yoruba has drawn such a wide and huge attention from researchers around the world that a work such as mine can only mention or, at best, rush through a few of the things that have been researched to date about the history and development of the Yoruba people.

The next chapter shall invoke the ever-fertile Yoruba rhetorical formula, *Ẹlà l'ọrọ̀*, and shall further develop the issues of the inherent Yoruba cultural plurality. My intention in discussing Yoruba historical origin, Yoruba culture, and oral performances in this chapter is to add more stars to the clear sky of the evidences of Yoruba inherent cultural plurality. I will not merely narrate the history or culture of the Yoruba in this chapter, but will use such materials in critical polemics.

It is interesting that, as Chinua Achebe said about the Igbo, *Yoruba* was not a universal concept, neither was it a general identity of all the Yoruba language-speaking people until sometime before colonization. However, unlike the Igbo, it did not take a civil war to create a "powerful consciousness" (Appiah 1992: 177) of Yoruba identity, although--as I have mentioned earlier--the family, the village and the language sub-groups [otherwise called dialects] continue to be important references to the people (I will return to this issue again). It will be interesting to consider the way five different authors discuss how the name *Yoruba* came about:

> 1. The country was probably first known to Europe from the North, through the explorers of Northern and Central Africa, for in old records the Hausa and Fulani names are used for the country and its capital; thus we see in *Webster's Gazetteer* "Yoruba," West Africa, East of Dahomey, area 70, 000 sq. miles, population two millions, capital Katunga. These are the Hausa terms for Yoruba and for Ọyọ. (Johnson 1921: xix)

> 2. The term Yoruba is sometimes said to have been derived from a foreign nickname, meaning cunning, given to the subjects of the Alafin of Ọyọ by the Fulani and Hausa. The Hausa word for the Yoruba is *Yarbanci*. Yoruba has been commonly applied to a large group, united more by language than by culture, whose members speak of themselves as Ọyọ, Ẹgba, Ijẹbu, Ifẹ, Ilesha and the other names of the various tribes. (Forde 1951: 1)

> 3. [As] these various groups of people were known in Sierra Leone only under the name Aku, the label , Yoruba, as that of an ethnic group could not have been long in vogue prior to 1856. It is indeed possible that, before being used to refer to the whole people, this name first gained currency only after the journey of Captain Clapperton from Badagry on the Gulf of Guinea to Katunga (Old Ọyọ or Eyeo). In the account of the journey published in 1982, he referred to the whole territory through which he passed on that journey as the country of the Yarriba and to the people themselves as the Yarribans. This name he adopted from the Hausa, who

applied it, apparently, to the people grouped together as Yoruba who were nearest to their own territory, that is the Ọyọ-Yoruba kingdom. (Fadipẹ 1970: 29-30)

4. Until recent times the Yorubas did not consider themselves a single people, but rather as citizens of Ọyọ, Benin, Yagba and other cities, regions or kingdoms. Ọyọ regarded Lagos and Ọwọ, for example, as foreign principalities, and the Yoruba kingdoms warred not only against the Dahomeans but against each other. The name Yoruba was applied to all these linguistically and culturally related peoples by their northern neighbors, the Hausas. (Courlander 1973: 2)

5. Indeed, the use of the word 'Yoruba' to refer to the whole area is surprisingly recent, dating only from the middle of the 19th century when it was introduced by missionaries and linguists (Law, 1977:5). It is derived from the Hausa word for the Ọyọ Yoruba, and they are still sometimes called the 'Yoruba proper' to distinguish them from the other major subgroups. Yoruba-speaking groups in the Benin and Togo republics refer to themselves as 'Ifẹ' rather than as 'Yoruba' (Igbẹ and Yai, 1973). (Eades, 1980: 2-4)

It is interesting to note that a word coined by the Hausas for "Ọyọ Yoruba" became the word the speakers use to describe themselves and their community. This development shows how, in active orality, one culture can easily nativizes or indigenizes names, concepts, and cultural practices from another. For example, why was it that Bariba, another oral culture and language group, had such an influence on the Yoruba as to have contributed to the way Ọranyan, a Yoruba forefather, chose the settlement later called the ancient Ọyọ? According to oral tradition reported by Samuel Johnson, the King of Bariba directed Ọranyan to use a particular charm in locating a new settlement:

> Tradition has it, that the king of Ibariba made a charm and fixed it on boa constriction [sic] and advised Ọranyan to follow the track of the boa and wherever it remained for 7 days and then disappeared, there he was to build a town. Ọranyan and his army followed his directions and went after the boa up to the foot of a hill called AJAKA where the reptile remained for 7 days, and then disappeared. According to instructions Ọranyan halted there, and built a town called ỌYỌAJAKA. This was the ancient city of Ọyọ marked in ancient maps as Eyeo or Katunga (the later being the Hausa term for Ọyọ) capital of Yarriba. (Johnson, p. 11)

The interaction of individuals in oral culture goes beyond the surface level. They treat each other first as human beings, rather than as Yoruba or Hausa or Bariba, and easily accept each other's tradition and way of life as authentic and human. For Ọranyan to have accepted the charm from a Bariba king shows the mutual respect and trust each ethnic group had for the other. Although they might be meeting for the first time, both groups demonstrated that a human being must not be a "stranger" in the other's company. In Yoruba history, it was not only the Hausa or Bariba that benefited the Yoruba; Yoruba language also has many enviable records in the histories of many other neighboring language groups. Language groups have occasions of disagreement and conflicts among themselves, examples of which we shall mention later in this chapter. However, it remains important that such conflicts were not based on the consideration that one was more "human" than the other, or that one's culture was intruding on the other's (which seems always to be bases for discrimination in New World societies).

To come back to the issue of the name *Yoruba*, I have no quarrel with the possibility that this word originally means "Cunning" (Forde, p. 1), or that it comes from the word *wayo* as the cunning individuals are called *mai wayo* in Hausa. However, it is more likely, as has also been argued, that the

original name, *Yarbanci* or *Yarriba*, comes from a Hausa word *raba*, divide, or the sentence *ya raba*, he/she divided [it] (see Forde, p. 1; Fadipẹ, p. 30). In my opinion, there is also a possibility of another word, *riba*, meaning "gain or profit", which the Hausa itself most likely borrows from Arabic. After all, *riba* may be easily established as the root word for *Yarriba*. Whatever word *Yoruba* comes from, it is clear that it has a connection to the open market and must have derived from trade or transactions. "Cunning," "divide", "gain" or "profit" are words people use in a traditional market.

The way the Yoruba name came about further confirms my contention that Yoruba active orality is not hostile to cultural influences, even though such influence has gone through a process of nativization. Otherwise, the Yoruba would not have accepted to be named by a sister ethnic group. Many words and concepts in Hausa can be traced to the Yoruba, as with all the other languages of active oral contact with Yoruba. However, such an analysis does not fall within the scope of this work.

The Yoruba-speaking people occupy an area, described by Eades as "Yoruba homeland" (p. 1), or N. A. Fadipẹ as "Yorubaland" (p. 21), in South Western Nigeria, outlined by two writers:

> 1. South Western Nigeria, from the Guinea Coast west to the Niger Delta, 200 miles inland to the Nigeria where it flows south-west to join the Benue, and extending west into Dahomey and French Togoland. The most westernly groups are on the right bank of Mono, to the north and south of Atakpamé. (Forde, p. 1)

> 2. The Yoruba country lies to the immediate West of the River Niger (below the confluence) and South of the Quorra (i.e., the Western branch of the same River above the confluence), having Dahomey on the West, and the Bight of Benin to the South. It is roughly speaking between latitude 6^{o} and 9^{o} North, and longitude 2^{o} 30' and 6^{o} 30' East. (Johnson, p. xix)

Within Nigeria alone, the Yoruba has various dialects or sub-groups: Ọyọ, Ẹgba, Ifẹ, Ijẹṣa, Ijẹbu, Ondo, Ketu, Ilọrin, Ekiti, Yagba, Akoko, Owe. Among the best sources about these individual groups are Daryll Forde's *The Yoruba Speaking Peoples* and Samuel Johnson's *The History of the Yorubas*. The British colonization of Yorubaland introduced some specific political dimensions to the life of the Yoruba people as it did to all the other ethnic groups in Nigeria. According to J.S. Eades (1980: 5):

> [T]he colonial powers imposed their own administrative structure which has undergone several modifications. Nigeria was initially divided into provinces which were subdivided into divisions and districts. In addition to the Lagos Colony, four provinces in Southern Nigeria had predominantly Yoruba population: Abẹokuta, Ijẹbu, Ondo and Ọyọ. In Northern Nigeria there were substantial Yoruba-speaking populations in Ilọrin and Kabba Provinces. In 1934, Ọyọ Province was split up, and Ibadan Province was created.

There have been several interesting developments since Nigerian independence from the British, especially after the Nigerian Civil War (1966-70). Many more states were created in Nigeria, the latest being in 1996 with the re-division of Nigeria into 36 states. As of 1998, however, the Yoruba people in Nigeria spread across seven of the Nigerian states: Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Ọyọ, Ọṣun, Ekiti and Kwara.

The Yoruba can also be found in neighboring West African countries and in the Americas: Sierra Leone, Togo, Benin. Descendants of Yoruba slaves can be found in Cuba and many other Caribbean Islands. They are known with different names, such as *Aku* (Sierra Leone), *Ana* (Togo), *Anago* (Dahomey), *Lakumi* (Cuba). Various other names are used among some Yoruba sub-groups in Nigeria (see Eades 1980: 1-3).

The Yoruba language belongs to the Kwa language group of the Nilo-Saharan sub-family or the Sudanic language family (Fadipẹ 1970: 55) and shares the same sub-family as some Nigerian languages, i.e., Igbo, Ebira, Nupe, Ibibio, Edo, among others (see Eades, p. 4). Among the most important characteristics of the Yoruba language is the tone. Tone is as important to Yoruba as stress is to English. It accounts for changes of meaning in Yoruba words. For example, these midtone sounds, ọ́kọ́, means husband, ọ́kọ̀ (mid-high), vehicle or machine, and ọ́kọ (mid-high), hoe. Fadipẹ has more good examples on Yoruba tone and also discusses Yoruba syllables and vocabularies in his *The Sociology* (see p. 55).

Yoruba vocabularies come from many root words, borrowed words, and sometime words and concepts nativized from many neighboring languages. Some words were adopted from the colonial language, English, and are used mostly among the urban Yoruba. The most important of Yoruba words include names of persons and their bodily parts; names of non-human beings; names of concepts, abstract and concrete; and words indicating parts of speech such as verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions. Yoruba forms its phrases by compounding and by the use of adjectives, adverbs and other parts of speech. Many new words are also formed through compounding, duplication and reduplication, as well as through affixation and derivations. It can be easily said that Yoruba people always find it easy to create new words in the language. Airplane: *ẹ̀rọ́ áyará bi àsá*, meaning literally, "machine [that is] as fast as the hawk". The word *ẹ̀rọ* denotes something that is being smithed, or fabricated; *rírọ* is "the act of creating or smithing". The word for radio is *ásọ̀rọ̀ mágbèsì*--that which talks without waiting for response. Some new words are formed through adoption and modification. For example, university as *fásitì* and professor

as *Kòfẹ́sọ̀*. I must, however, emphasize that some of these words, especially the adopted ones, can only make meaning among urban Yoruba or the elite who can read and write. With the numerical system (or the numeration), Yoruba developed a cowry currency which no doubt helped them to create a system of oral numerals, and thus according to Fadipẹ,

> [T]he Yoruba have a well-developed system of numeration. There are three different and parallel classes of numerals which, though formed of the same root words, are, nevertheless, distinguished one from the other by the definiteness of the mechanism by which they are formed. (p. 61)

Later on I shall discuss socio-political activities among the Yoruba, especially such activities as marriage and kinship in which oral forms are central.

On the origin of the Yoruba people, two important theories still survive. How or from where have the researchers obtained these theories? Samuel Johnson explains how they came to us from oral sources:

> The National Historians are certain families retained by the King at Ọyọ whose office is hereditary, they also act as the King's bards, drummers, and cymbalists; it is on them we depend as far as possible for any reliable information we now possess. (p. 3)

The first origin story is about how the Yoruba came from Mecca to their present place, and here I will reproduce N.A. Fadipẹ's summary of the relevant part of the tale:

> [T]he Yoruba came from Mecca to their present abode, having been driven out of Mecca following a civil war between Oduduwa and his followers who were conservative and did their best to enforce a return to idolatry and the Muslim party. Oduduwa died before he could organise an avenging expedition against the party which drove him out of his native land. It was left to his grandson Ọranyan to do this,

his own son Ọkanbi having died before him after Oduduwa's death. The expedition did not proceed very far, however, before it broke up owing to dissension between Ọranyan and his brothers. Out of shame Ọranyan would not return to Ile-Ifẹ from which he had set out, but settled down on or near the site of Old Ọyọ (called Katanga in Hausa) which subsequently became his capital. He had left his treasures and fetishes in Ile-Ifẹ in charge of a trusted servant, Adimu, who was also charged with carrying out the worship of the national òrìṣà (godlings). This servant was given an undisputed authority in Ile-Ifẹ after he himself had settled down in Old Ọyọ. Thereafter, whenever he needed anything from among these treasures, he sent word to the servant. ... through thus performing some of the most important duties of a king, namely, the religious functions, Adimu was practically raised to a kingly status. (pp. 33-4; also see Johnson, pp. 3-14).

The second Yoruba creation myth is rather long, but will lose its special mythical touch if I simply summarize rather than reproduce what is relevant for this work. The story postulates that the Yoruba were created by *Ọ̀lọ́rún*, otherwise called *Olódùmarè*, at the beginning of time. I will reproduce many parts of this narration below, and I hope the reader, while imagining that he is listening to an oral narration of this Yoruba creation myth, will allow his inner voice to read aloud to him, perhaps he will feel the mythical effect which a typical Yoruba listener feels when such stories are narrated:

In ancient days, at the beginning of time, there was no solid land here where people now dwell. There was only outer space and the sky, and far below, an endless stretch of water and wild marshes. Supreme in the domain of the sky was the orisha, or god, called Olorun, also known as Olodumare and designated by many praise names. Also living in that place were numerous other orishas, each having attributes of his own, but none of whom had knowledge or powers equal to those of Olorun. Among them was Orunmila, also called Ifa, the eldest son of Olorun. To this orisha Olorun had given the power to read the future, to understand the secret of existence and to divine the process of fate. There was the orisha Obatala, King of the White Cloth, whom Olorun trusted as though he also were a son. There was the orisha Eshu, whose character was neither good nor bad. He was compounded out of the elements of chance and accident,

and his nature was unpredictability. He understood the principles of speech and language, and because of this gift he was Olorun's linguist. These and the other orishas living in the domain of the sky acknowledged Olorun as the owner of everything and as the highest authority in all matters. Also living there was Agemo, the Chameleon, who served Olorun as a trusted servant.

Down below, it was the female deity Olokun who ruled over the vast expanses of water and wild marshes, a gray region with no living things in it, either creatures of the bush of vegetation. This is the way it was, Olorun's living sky above and Olokun's domain of water below. Neither kingdom troubled the other. They were separate and apart. The orishas of the sky lived on, hardly noticing what lay below them.

All except Obatala, King of the White Cloth. He alone looked down on the domain of Olokun and pondered on it, saying to himself, "Everything down there is a great wet monotony. It does not have the mark of any inspiration or living thing." And at last he went to Olorun and said, "The place ruled by Olokun is nothing but sea, marsh and mist. If there were solid land in that domain, fields and forests, hills and valleys, surely it could be populated by orishas and other living things."

Olorun answered, "Yes, it would be a good thing to cover the water with land. But it is an ambitious enterprise. Who is to do the work? And how should it be done?"

Obatala said, "I will undertake it. I will do whatever is required."

He left Olorun and went to the house of Orunmila, who understood the secrets of existence, and said to him, "Your father has instructed me to go down below and make land where now there is nothing but marsh and sea, so that living beings will have a place to build their own towns and grow their crops. You, Orunmila, who can divine the meanings of all things, instruct me further. How may this work be begun?"

Orunmila brought out his divinity tray and cast sixteen palm nuts on it. He read their meanings by the way they fell. He gathered them up and cast again, again reading their meanings. And when he had cast many times he added meanings to meanings, and said, "These are the things you must do: Descend to the watery wastes on a chain of gold, taking with you a snail shell full of sand, a white hen to disperse the sand, a black cat to be your companion, and a palm nut. That is what the divining figures tell us."

Obatala went next to the goldsmith and asked for a chain of gold long enough to reach from the sky to the surface of the water.

The goldsmith asked, "Is there enough gold in the sky to make such a chain?"

Obatala answered, "Yes, begin your work. I will gather the gold." Departing from the forge of the goldsmith, Obatala went then to Orunmila, Eshu and the other orishas, asking each of them for gold. They gave him whatever they had. Some gave gold dust, some gave rings, bracelets or pendants. Obatala collected gold from everywhere and took it to the goldsmith.

The goldsmith said, "More gold is needed."

So Obatala continued seeking gold, and after that he again returned to the goldsmith, saying, "Here is more metal for your chain."

The goldsmith said, "Still more is needed."

Obatala said, "There is no more gold in the sky."

The goldsmith said, "The chain will not reach to the water."

Obatala answered, "Nevertheless, make the chain. We shall see."

The goldsmith went to work. When the chain was finished he took it to Obatala. Obatala said, "It must have a hook at the end."

"There is no gold remaining," the goldsmith said.

Obatala replied, "Take some of the links and melt them down."

The goldsmith removed some of the links, and out of them he fashioned a hook for the chain. It was finished. He took the chain to Obatala.

Obatala said, "Now I am ready." He fastened the hook on the edge of the sky and lowered the chain. Orunmila gave him the things that were needed--a snail shell of sand, a white hen, a black cat, and a palm nut. Then Obatala gripped the chain with his hands and feet and began the descent. The chain was very long. When he had descended only half its length Obatala saw that he was leaving the realm of light and entering the region of grayness. A time came when he heard that wash of waves and felt the damp mists rising from Olokun's domain. He reached the end of the golden chain, but he was not yet at the bottom, and he clung there, thinking, "If I let go I will fall into the sea."

While he remained at the chain's end thinking such things, he heard Orunmila's voice from above, saying, "The sand."

So Obatala took the snail shell from the knapsack at his side and poured out the sand.

Again he heard Orunmila call to him, saying this time, "The hen."

Obatala dropped the hen where he had poured the sand. The hen began at once to scratch at the sand and scatter it in all directions. Wherever the sand was scattered it became dry land. Because it was scattered unevenly the sand formed hills and valleys. When this was accomplished, Obatala let go of the chain and came

down and walked on the solid earth that had been created. The land extended in all directions, but still it was barren of life.

Obatala named the place where he had come down Ife. He built a house there. He planted his palm nut and a palm tree sprang out of the earth. It matured and dropped its palm seeds. More palm trees came into being. Thus there was vegetation at Ife. Obatala lived on, with only his black cat as a companion. (Courlander, pp. 15-19)

It appears to me that Harold Courlander in relating this story simply translates the wordings of the oral narrators, following their pauses and inserting their high and low tones. I have heard this story narrated to me many times as a child, and even though the areas linking the parenthood of the *òrìṣà* to *Ọlọrún* seem a little strange to me, the narration clearly brings alive one of Yoruba's important theories about the creation of the world. Does this kindle in the reader the type of mystical feeling the story rekindles in me? That is one of the purposes of providing the lengthy quotation above: to give the reader the kind of experiences a Yoruba child derives from listening often to legendary and mythical stories such as this creation myth. Imagine a young child, from about 3 years of age, in the most moving oral narration possible, being introduced to the concept of multiple gods (up to five Yoruba deities have already been mentioned in the above story), diverse beliefs and worships, and the idea of plurality within his own "small" language, cultural, and spiritual worlds! To make the long story short, *Ọlọrún* later sent *Agẹ́mọ́*, the chameleon, to the earth through the golden chain, where he found that the place was a huge space of darkness. Due to the report of the *Agẹ́mọ́*, *Ọlọrún* made the Sun, which gives light and warmth. But, according to this story, *Ọbàtálá* soon discovered again that despite the company of his cat, he was lonely, and so he "decided to create people" (Courlander, p. 19). Using clay from the ground, he molded human

shapes and dried them under the Sun. After an exhausting job, he resorted to drinking the inner fluid of the palm trees, and being drunk from the wine, he continued shaping his objects, but this time under the influence of wine, he made many very crooked shapes. Thereafter, he consulted *Ọlọrún* saying, "I have made human beings to live with me here in Ifẹ, but only you can give them the breath of life" (quoted in Courlander, p. 20). *Ọlọrún* answered his call by putting life into the shapes, and thus they became the first people on earth, people of various shapes, some normal and others physically challenged, like cripples, etc. This story further narrates how the creatures began to worship the various deities, i.e., *Ọbàtálá*, *Ọlọrún*, *Ọrúnmìlà*, *Olokún*, and *Èṣù* (see Courlander, pp. 21-3).

The Yoruba seems to have been the most urbanized African pre-colonial people, with Ife, Ọyọ, Ibadan, Abeokuta, Ijebu-Ode, Ilesa, Akure, as few examples. The Yoruba society has not changed much despite contemporary influences on Nigerian society. Except for the elites who, due to new riches and material acquisitions resulting from the post-independence oil boom (see Apter, 1996: 441-66), build houses and live outside the traditional family compounds, most Yoruba in semi-urban and rural areas continue to live largely in *agbóle*, the family compound, with their parents, grandparents, uncles, children, and grandchildren--sometimes up to four or five generations of family members, often with the oldest male member as the Bale,[1] or *head*. Membership at the *agbóle*, however, is not always limited, either by oral tradition or contemporary reality, to blood-relatives. What Daryll Forde said as long ago as 1951 about the Yoruba *agbóle* remains true in 1998:

> The men of the component families need not, however, be members of a single patrilineage ... two or more of these may be represented. In Ife it is regarded as consisting of three distinct sets of people; the *omole* (*omo ile*: descendants of the house) the members of the patrikin (*ibatọn*) which established the house or compound; the wives of male members of the *omole* and finally 'strangers' in the compound, i.e. other men admitted as residents, but not assimilated to the 'owning' patrikin and who may be patrikin among themselves, together with their wives. The term *omole*, however, includes daughters even when they have left the co-resident group at marriage. Such resident daughters of an *omole* are also referred to as *omo osho*. (Forde, p. 11)

The Yoruba people define a Yoruba community by *káàarọ́ òòjíire*, wherever people traditionally speak the language now called Yoruba. *Káàrọ̀* (or, *ó ku òwúrọ̀*), means, in Yoruba, "good morning," and *òòjíire* means "hope you woke up well (or did you wake up well?)" It is a phatic communion among the people, and traditional ethics require people to ask after each other and to find out about each other's health. Yoruba is one of the African ethnic groups that have a very extended form of greeting, a different one for a different purpose, such as when one is seen standing, sitting, eating, sleeping, in the morning, afternoon, evening, during the raining season, the dry season, harvest, droughts, etc., and ethics demand that a properly cultured Yoruba know when and what greeting form is used at each of these times. It is little wonder then that the simple way the Yoruba community is defined is *Ilẹ káàrọ́, òòjíire*, "the land/community [where people say] good morning, hope you wake up well."

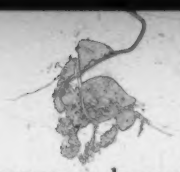
One important feature of Yoruba speech is the use of respect pronouns. Social and age hierarchies are very important and respect pronouns are common words of very precise usage. A traditional ruler is respected, whether or not he is an elder by age, since rulership in most communities is by inheritance rather than age. Sometimes age may play a role in choosing a

successor, the king or chief is not in any case, the oldest person in the community. He is, however, regarded as the eldest since he is also seen as representing the ancestors and having the authority of the gods. The Yoruba say, *Ọbá èkéjì òrìṣà*, meaning king, deputy to the *òrìṣà* deity (in Ọyọ, it is *Alaafin èkéjì òrìṣà, ikú bàbàá yèyèé*, which may mean "Alafin, deputy of the deity, the death of fathers and mothers!"). Indeed there are many other seniority levels that do not depend on age, like that of the wives in a compound or first family level. Also, in the larger community, issues such as family size, hard work, money and material wealth, or spiritual position are used to determine status (see Forde, p. 11).

A person of subordinate status does not address his elder by name but uses respect pronouns instead. For example, a younger brother addresses his elder one as *ẹ̀gbọ́n*, and while speaking to him uses the second person, *ẹ̀yín*, or the third person, *àwọ́n*. Both *ẹ̀yín*, and *àwọ́n* serve also as plural nouns (their singular forms are *ìwọ́, òhún*, i.e. "you", "him"), but in this case they are respect pronouns. Therefore, translating literally, when a younger person is directly addressing or talking about his elder brother, he says:

(A).

1. I am talking to you (English does not have a clear equivalent of *ẹ̀yín* which is the word adopted in this position, but "you" here is the type one will use for two or more people, like the French "vous" for a singular subject).
2. They (respect pronoun, meaning, however, his elder brother) are coming.
3. This book is for them (respect pronoun, "them," meaning only one person, his elder brother).



The pronoun does not change when the elders that are being addressed are two or more, in which case it will serve as both plural and respect marker. When the elder is addressing his younger one he says:

(B).

1. I am talking to you (singular, no respect pronoun).
2. He is coming.
3. This book is for him.

However, in a situation where the younger one is in a higher social or traditional status like the king or traditional chief, the elder brother addresses him as in (A) above. The Yoruba do not take kindly to a disrespectful behavior. They consider it as a sign of pride and pomposity which may attract some punishment in form of verbal rebuke, or alienation. For example, a child who introduces his father's elder or younger brother to a stranger as "My father's brother" is assumed by this "father's brother" to be saying that he (the uncle) has no responsibility or authority over him (the child), and thus is not of importance to him (the child). This is a terrible insult in family circles, and the "Father's brother" may react by either rebuking him or by withdrawing whatever support he gives him as required by the local custom, which is usually the same as the one that the person's biological father may give to him.

Yoruba pronouns do not have gender distinction, and words such as *ohun*, *awon* (third person), *iwọ*, and *ẹyin* (second person) do not indicate gender. Also, in Yoruba family relationships, concepts such as uncle, aunt, niece, nephew are not in common usage. In fact, there are no Yoruba words for them, and the speaker must formulate the concept using phrases or

sentences. It is considered rude for a child to introduce his father's brother as an uncle instead of a father, or his mother's sister as an aunt instead of a mother. Also, both of these people introduce him as their son (or daughter in case of a female). There is no such word as "cousin", as every person is either an elder one, *ẹ̀gbọ́n*, or a younger one, *àbúrò* (both *ẹ̀gbọ́n* and *àbúrò* are gender neutral).

There are no people richer than the Yoruba in oral performances, though all the oral cultures in Nigeria are indeed very rich. The Yoruba people love merrymaking to the extent that virtually every merriment includes a kind of oral performance. The Yoruba sing and dance at birth, at marriage, and at death. During all of these times oral singers are engaged to entertain the people. Forms of oral performances are limitless among the Yoruba. Apart from the ones that are well known across the culture, there are many oral genres among sub-groups. Persons interested in Yoruba oral forms will discover new forms every day; the further they travel, the more they will see. Ulli Beier[1*], in classifying genres of Yoruba oral poetry, recognizes *Oríkì*, *Ẹsẹ̀ Ifá*, *Òwé*, *Ìjálá*, *Iwì*, *Ẹkún Ìyàwo*, and *Àlọ Àpámọ̀* (see "Yoruba Poetry" 20). However, Babalola (1964: 20) adds *Rárà*, *Ọfọ̀*, *Ògèdè* and *Ìyẹ̀rẹ̀ Ifá* (also Ruth Finnegan, 1970: 79).

According to Olaitan Olatunji (1970: 8), Yoruba oral poetry is classified not by its themes but by the styles in which it is rendered, and by its contents. Olatunji classifies Yoruba poetry into two categories, i.e. "Chanting modes" and "Content types" (p. 9). Those poems he calls chanting modes are the ones recognized by their chanting styles. These are *Rárà*, *Ìjala*, *Ẹ̀sà*, *Ẹkun Ìyàwo* and *Ìyẹ̀rẹ̀ Ifá*. Babalọla (1966) and Ọlájubù (1972; 1980) write very

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[1*] The remaining lines of this paragraph already appear in Na'Allah 1988. "Dadakuada: The Trends in the Development of Ilorin Traditional Oral Poetry." B.A. Thesis, University of Ilorin, Nigeria.

extensively on *Ìjala* and *Iwì* respectively. Most of these forms are explored in contemporary compositions such as *Àpàlà, Sákárà,* Wákà, *Fujì, Jùju.* Some genres that are specific to Yoruba language sub-groups include *Órín-Ọ́pá* in Kabba Bunu. In Ilọrin there are *Dàdàkúàdá, Ere Baalu, Kàkàkí, Ére ọlọ́mọ́-ọ́bá, Were, Wakà, Órín Màkóndòro* and *Toobẹni* (see Na'Allah, 1987: I, p. 6; II, p. 9).

In addition to oral poetry, many Yoruba also enjoy community-based festivals and ritual performances. Most of the time the festivals and rituals include poetry, dance and mime, and costume, and involve a larger community of people, young and old. In some annual festivals, like the *Awon* festival in Saho (see Na'Allah, 1997b: 125-42), the community comes together to marry young women to eligible suitors. Similar festivals take place among the Ogori Magongo (see Na'Allah, 1994a: 112-15). There are yam festivals which usher in yam harvests and the eating of new yams in many Nigerian Yoruba and non-Yoruba communities in Nigeria. Some festivals are dedicated to deities such as *Sàngo, Ọ́yá, Ọ̀ṣun, Ògun, Ọ́bàtala,* and they can be found in many Yoruba communities. Plenty of food and drink is provided during festivals, as people are generally happy and very generous. What these festivals have provided for the Yoruba is that whether or not there are births, weddings or deaths, the people will always explore oral performances, dance, listen to music, sing, mime, and do such other things that the festivals provide.

I would like to explore another example regarding written culture and its interaction with oral culture in Nigeria. The result, of course, differs from what one may get when an oral culture interacts with another oral culture, and shows how an active orality society can co-exist with a written culture within its own territory. Islam and Christianity among the Yoruba are the

best examples of written culture in an active oral environment, and this assertion does not in any way diminish the importance of orality in these religions, especially in Islam, in which the oral form is crucial (see Graham, 1987).

We do not appease lions and pretend that elephants are insignificant to the peace of the forest. To discuss contemporary Yoruba without calling on the elephants of the modern Yoruba culture will be grossly incomplete. Islam and Christianity are also so deeply ingrained in the Yoruba culture that sometimes it seems that these two religions are inherently Yoruba. After all, some arguments do link both religions to Yoruba (see Johnson, pp. 3-11). As much as seven centuries ago, there was evidence of a strong muslim population among the Yoruba, including both the peasantry and the royalty. Evidence of this continues to show, where even in the house of Ọyọ Yoruba the Islamic reli[illegible]n has been well rooted. The current Alafin of Ọyọ, Abdul-Hameed Adeyẹmi, is a Muslim, as was his father (also formerly Alafin). Yoruba communities such as Iseyin, Ṣaki, Ibadan, Kisi, Oṣogbo, Ilọrin, and Lagos have a very high population of Muslims. Two centuries ago, around 1823, Christian Missionary Society (CMS) came to Badagry and started, with later missionary groups, missionary work that took them all around Yorubaland, and many other areas of Nigeria. Abẹokuta, Ifẹ, Ileṣa, Ijẹbu, Ondo, are among Yoruba communities with very large Christian populations. It is clearly erroneous to insist on which of the two religions has a greater following among the Yoruba, since no census has been done to determine the figures.

One of the implications of this involvement of Islam and Christianity in an active orality community is the fact that since both religions have written scriptures (their tenets clearly stated in writing), they have to

contend with the reality of orality in Yoruba culture (I discussed parts of this issue in an unpublished manuscript, "Orality as Scripture"). Today, among some Yoruba Muslims and Christians, traditional Yoruba oral forms have come to complement their written scriptures during worships and in their proselytization methods[2*]. In Ilọrin, for example, some Islamic preachers have adopted traditional oral forms, reaching out to Islamic adherents and sometimes delivering the songs alongside Quranic verses during public preachings. The following is an example of such songs, called *Orín Èsìn*, but which performance mode was originally taken from *rárà*:

La ilaha
ko s'ọba meji nibikan
ila'llahu, af'ọlọhun
Ohun ni n seję, Ohun ni n semu
N ningbọ bukata aawa ẹda
ẹda o mookan wale aye
ẹda o ni mookan rọrun
iwa tẹda ba wu ni tẹda
isẹ tẹda ba see ni tẹda
iwa tẹda bawu ni tẹda
al-humma an-nabi ẹjare
kaman ja s'ọrun lofifo. (Na'Allah, 1989: 20)

La ilaha,
There is no two Gods anywhere
Ila'llahu, except Allah the Almighty
He provides food, He provides drinks
He answers all people's callings
A human creature brings nothing to the world
A human creature shall take nothing to heaven
The character displayed by a person is his (only) possession

[2*] Discussions in the next four paragraphs have been published. Na'Allah 1994b. "The Influence of Traditional Oral Poetry on Modern Religions (Islam and Christianity) Among the Yoruba (Nigeria)." *Frankfurter Afrikanistische Blätter*. 6: 65-74.

The good deeds of a person are his (only) possession,
Umma of Annabi, males and females of you,
Human being must endeavor to strive hard (in doing good)
So that he doesn't go to heaven in emptiness.

Another Muslim song similar to *Ewi* has also been performed by a Muslim preacher:

Olowo aye wọn o nisimi
ọlọla aye wọn o nisimi
talaka aye wọn o nisimi
kinni o jẹ olowo aye lee ni simi?
ki n mamaku, kowo o mama tan
ko jẹ kolowo aye lee ni simi
kini o jẹ ọlọla aye le ni simi?
ki n mamaku, ki wọn o ma yọ mi
b'ọba ba bimi, kini n o fọ fun
ko jẹ kọlọla aye lee nisimi
kini o jẹ talaka aye o le nisimi?
ki n un o majẹ, kini un o ma mu
bi lamayin tito ni un o ma to
kojẹ ki talaka aye lee nisimi. (see Na'Allah, 1989: 19-25)

The rich of the world have no rest
The royal of the world have no rest
The poor of the world have no rest
What denies the rich of the world rest?
"Oh, I don't want to die, I don't want my riches to perish"
Would never allow the rich of the world to rest
What denies the royalty of the world rest?
"Oh, I don't want to die, I don't want to be deposed
If the government asks me, what explanation shall I give?"
would never allow the royalties of the world to rest
What denies the poor of this world rest?
"What shall I eat, what shall I drink?

What that person achieved I want to achieve"
Would never allow the poor of the world rest.

The above Ewi-like song is characteristically philosophical. It adopts repetition, question, and direct speech techniques to discuss what it calls "restlessness of human beings" in the world. The involvement of oral performances in Islamic activities among the Yoruba is so strong that some Yoruba Muslims employ Yoruba singers to sing for them (some singers, freelance, just go to sing whether or not they are invited) when they return to Ilorin from holy pilgrimages in Mecca. In one such instance, I recorded the following song:

Ọba Oluwa lawa mama ki
la mama ki, Ọba Oluwa lawa mama ki
al-hamdulillahi
adupẹ lọwọ Ọba ẹda oo
Alabi re maka o mama bọ
oju wa t'awọn ọta oo
Ọba Oluwa, Ọba Oluwa lawa mama ki. (Alabi Ramani, Apala Artist, field Performance, Alore, Ilọrin, 20 May 1990; see Na'Allah, 1994b.)

It is God Almighty that we praise
He is, that we praise, it is God Almighty that we praise
Alhamdu li llahi (thanks be to Allah)
We expressed our gratitude unto the creator of mankind
Alabi went to Mecca and returned safely
And the enemies are shamed,
It is God Almighty, it is God Almighty that we praise.

The above song alleges that the celebrant has an enemy who would have been delighted if he had died during the pilgrimage. According to the poet,

it is only God, and not human beings, who should be praised for ensuring the successful return of the celebrant from Mecca. In many ways, such a belief by the oral poet is derived from traditional Yoruba culture just as the praising of "the only One God" is derived from Islam.

Poetic rendition is a principal part of Christian religious rites. There is quite a number of hymn books which are compiled for Christian worship in and outside of churches. However, my research reveals that traditional African songs and performances have found their way into Christian religious hymns and songs. Some churches even allow traditional *Ewì* and *Ijálá* (I shall discuss the Yoruba oral forms later) poets to come to church and chant praises for the bride and the bridegroom during wedding ceremonies. The following examples are traditional Yoruba songs that have been incorporated into Christian hymns:

> Ẹẹ ba min ra baba k'Ọba ogo o
> Ọba a tẹrẹrẹ kaari aye
> oti tẹrẹrẹ deele mi o
> Ọba a tẹrẹrẹ kaari aye. (Church Services, C & S Church, Sabo-Oke, Ilọrin, February 24, 1991; see Na'Allah, 1994b)
>
> Do please come en-mass to greet the benevolent God
> The God-who-spreads-everywhere-in-the-world
> He is present in my house
> The God-who-spreads-everywhere-in-the-world.

The song is rendered during church services amidst dancing and clapping. God is described as *á tẹ́rẹ́rẹ́ káàri áyé*, one "who-is-everywhere-in-the-world" or "who-spreads-everywhere-in-the-world". This is how the Yoruba praise and adore *Olódùmarè*, the Supreme Being. It seems then that the

above song was adopted from Yoruba praise poetry. One Yoruba elder, Alabi Ọmọlabi, age 85, reproduced for me what he claimed came deep from the Yoruba's traditional praise poetry:

> Ọba mi,
> ariwa riwa
> arinu rode
> aroju rẹyin
> a tẹrẹrẹ kaari aye. (Alabi Ọmọlabi, Agbarẹrẹ, Ilọrin, 27 February 1991; see Na'Allah, 1994b)

> My God,
> He who-sees-the-past, who-sees-the -future
> He who-sees-the-inside (mind), who-sees-the-outside
> He who-sees-the-front, who-sees-the-back
> He who-spreads-all-over-the-world.

In Yoruba cosmology, the Olodumare is the Supreme Being. There are several arguments by contemporary writers on whether or not He is Omnipresent and Omniscient in the Yoruba world view (see Gbadegesin, 1991: 87-93). It is clear, however, from the above songs that the Yoruba see Him as capable of being everywhere and as being supreme in his authority. However, this may also be a result of the indigenization of Islamic and Christian concepts, which is now causing arguments and counter arguments among contemporary scholars. Segun Gbadegesin has summarized well such arguments in his discussion of "Traditional African Religiosity: Myth or reality" (see pp. 83-104).

Incantation and magic have also been incorporated into some Christian forms of worship in Nigeria, just as they would not be jettisoned by some Muslims in their daily lives. Evidence abounds of Christian pastors

and bishops employing incantations in their verbal deliverances. One of my sources alleged that many pastors use magic and metaphysics to draw people to attend their churches. We also confirmed, through discussions with some people, that many Yoruba Muslim preachers and Christian pastors wear traditional Yoruba magical strings, *Ôndè*, around their waists, usually to command respect and authority among the people in places of worship. This development, which some adherents of Islam and Christianity claim is a sin against God, is certainly what Lanrewaju Adepọju, an Ibadan Chief and a recently avowed Muslim crusader, refers to in his *Ewi* poetry:

> Irun ni gbogbo wa n ki nile Oluwa ...
> awa o ma ye eeyan totunfi onde s'ibadi wa si Masalasi,
> bo ba ẹ pe wọn n'igbagbọ ododo, emi ni gbẹrẹ tun nse loju wọn?
> Eeyan kankan o si ni mu dudu ma ọba yaarabi ki'le aye ẹ o toro
> oruka Ogun tẹẹ fi sọwọ ni sọọsi nkọ, kilode o
> igbagbọ tẹẹẹ ni sẹlẹda o to kọ?
> Ẹ se bi boya Ọluwa lẹẹ ntan jẹ ni ... (Lanrewaju Adepọju, "Ọrọ Oluwa" LALPS 142, 1990, see also Na'Allah, 1994b)

> It is prayer we all observe in the house of God
> We do not know the number of people who put magic strings around their waists to the mosque
> If they do have honest belief (in Allah), what does incision want on their faces?
> No person will ever combine evil with God Almighty and still have a successful life
> What about the Ogun ring that you put on your finger in the church?
> Is the belief you have in the Creator not enough?
> You think it is God that you deceive ...

My research shows that the forces of traditional oral culture are penetrating deep into Islam and Christianity practices in Africa, regardless of such attacks from preachers like Lanrewaju Adepọju. In fact, there are churches in

Africa today, called "African Churches", which try to promote African culture and to synthesize it with traditional Christian churches practices.

The most astounding evidence of the influence of African active orality on modern "written" religions (Islam and Christianity) is the infiltration of *ọ́fọ̀*, magical incantations, into the sermons of some Yoruba Pastors, Bishops, and Muslim Mallams. In one instance, at the beginning of a Sunday service, a Pastor chants the following:

> Omin ni n poro ina
> ojo gbiriri ni n pa oro ọgbẹlẹ
> gbogbo awọn ọta wa
> ki ina maa jo wọn. (Personal interview with A.A. Joseph, 26 February 1991)
>
> It is the water that kills the poison of fire
> It is the thundering rain that kills the dryness of the land
> All our enemies, let the fire burn them.

Water, the archetypal holiness, purity, peace, and godliness is at war with fire, the archetypal evil and destruction. The Pastor concerned is invoking the power of water against fire, the symbol of the evil of his enemies. He also commands fire to destroy all of his and his congregation's enemies. It is possible that the Pastor, like the B*ábálawó*, the *Ifá* or oracle man, or like an African magician, has an alligator pepper or even an *àṣẹ́*, a magical incision, on his tongue. He certainly does not use incantations only for aesthetic effects. Also, while welcoming someone who was reverting to Islam, Imam, a Muslim leader, once offered many prayers and recited from the holy Qur'an, and added the following chants to reassure those who feared that the person could be harmed by some enemies:

Eyi ti n jẹ ẹni ba deeru leeru n tọ
gbogbo ẹni to ba sọ ti ẹ laburu
aburu ni o ma jẹ tiẹ na. (Adeyi Compound, Ilorin, 17 February 1991)

Which means that whoever blows ashes into the air
Will have ashes coming after him;
Whoever talks ill of you will have ill for himself.

Ashes are seen as an element of destruction, and blowing ashes at a person is seen as a wish for that person's destruction. The above incantation is meant to provide a full sense of security for the person the performer is facing. In any case, it is clear that in active orality, it is not easy to hinder the influence of oral culture. It is a living force within society. In the next chapter we will further discuss how Western education has not yet threatened active orality, and how Yoruba culture continues to prosper despite the importation of American television culture.

Indeed, no culture is static. Every culture is dynamic and thus changes according to developments within and around it. It would be naive to say that Yoruba culture, or any culture subject at all to the massive Western influence the Yoruba have gone through, will not change in any way. History and contemporary research show that Yoruba culture has consistently undergone such changes, but these changes are not enough to support the hypothesis that the Yoruba, or better put, the Ẹgba, the Ilọrin, the Ijẹbu, the Ọyọ, etc., have lost their identity. Social and cultural activities among the Yoruba in 1998 show that as a predominantly oral society, Yoruba society has not lost its ability to indigenize and nativize the foreign elements with which it comes into contact its ability to represent them in its own local form. It makes such forms a part of its own culture, rather than maintaining them as English, Hausa, Fulani, Igbo or Arabic.

A good example is how the urban or city Yoruba have responded to the influx of video and television culture in the 1990s. Rather than allowing these Western mediums to continue to project English and foreign cultures in Nigeria, they adopted them to suit the local tastes and use them for films featuring local cultural realities. They embark on massive oral cultural productions on radio, television, and video, and recent research confirms that in 1996 in Nigeria more films were released in local languages than in English (see Schmidt, 1998: 2). Filmmakers realize that most of Nigeria is still an active orality society and that to reach the greater part of people they must produce films appealing to oral society even for urban centers. Producers such as Ogunde (the late), Jimoh Aliu, Lateef Adejumọ, Ṣọla Adeyẹmi, Adegboyega, Moses Ọlaiya, Yẹmi Ẹlẹbuibọn and others made and continue to make films and video documentary on oral performances.

Yet oral poetry and festivals, oral performances and radios, and television and films are not the only way for the Yoruba to enjoy their orature. Very early in the morning, when a child wakes up, his praise names are chanted by the grandparent; each time he does something good for the elder in the compound they remind him of his great grandparents through songs and tell him about how brave and courageous and good they were. The mother has lullabies with which she lulls her crying baby to sleep. The kids have games, such as hide and seek, pure songs, and some involving acting and role playing. The marketplace is another fertile area of Yoruba oral performance. There are advertisement songs--*ôrín ìpólowo-ọjà*-- almost everywhere in the locality. There are freelance poets around the market singing to whoever cares to listen and appreciate their songs. Musical accompaniment is crucial in many Yoruba songs. The *ìyáálù, gángán, ọ̀mélẹ́, ágógó, dundun, sẹ̀kẹ̀rẹ̀, àkúbà, bẹ̀mbẹ́*, are a few of the drum types used to

provide beautiful music to Yoruba songs. Both the drummers and the singers are called *àyàn*, as we mentioned as an example in the first chapter. Being an *àyàn* is a serious business. In some families it is hereditary. The Yoruba have some oral performers who perform in obedience for the gods. For example, the *Ologun Ijálá* beggars perform strictly on the command of the *Ifá* priest. Another *Ìjálá* performer, the trained *Ìjálá* artist performs freely on occasions such as weddings and naming ceremonies.

The folktale is also a very interesting performance that involves every member of the household. It is always an opportunity for parent, grandparents, and elder and younger children to come together and participate in folktale sessions. Folktale sessions are one of the moments that the elders are able to interact on an affectionate level with their children, and the children are able to be close to their grandparents. The elders teach them moral education through folktale, and they create opportunities for the children to learn to sing, dance, and even make mistakes in the narration of the tale, thus preparing them for much bigger performances at village centers or community festivals.

I have established, in this chapter, that the Yoruba are an inherently diverse group. In fact, I have shown that the concept of plurality is rooted in its very origin. The Yoruba creation story promotes the concept of the plurality of gods, goddesses, deities, and worships. Also, we have discussed that the Yoruba, due to the active use of oral performances and traditions among them, continue to be an active orality society. This chapter also demonstrates the sustenance of plurality features in oral performances and other socio-cultural practices among the Yoruba. Islam and Christianity, as examples of written cultures in contemporary Yoruba society, depend heavily on Yoruba oral forms for proselytizing. Despite the influences of

written cultures such as contemporary Western culture, or Islam and Christianity, the Yoruba people have always found ways to remain loyal to their cultural identity.

Chapter 2

Researching Folktales and the Yoruba Inherent Cultural Plurality

Ẹlà l'ọ̀rọ̀! The last chapter showed that Yoruba culture, despite colonization and the vigorous contemporary importation of Western pop culture through electronic media into Nigeria, retains its identity, and continues to help the Yoruba define their Yorubaness. This chapter shall therefore discuss Yoruba's intrinsic cultural plurality in contrast to Western concepts of multiculturalism.

Notwithstanding the large number of ethnic groups in Nigeria, the Yoruba, just like any active orality culture, continues to thrive adequately within multiple ethno-cultural spaces. Indeed, from our discussions in chapter 1, it is clear that the idea of plurality is not new to Yoruba culture, as Yoruba culture is intrinsically pluralistic. For example, the Yoruba people have a plural concept of gods and goddesses, and of religious beliefs. Any Yoruba is free to worship any or all of the gods as he wishes or to which the *Ifá* directs him.

Some of the important points in the two Yoruba origin stories narrated in chapter strongly support a theory of the inherent cultural plurality of the Yoruba:

1. the Arabia origin and the move from Mecca to the present place indicate the possibility of meeting several ethnic and cultural groups on the way, and of being influenced by such groups; one example is the Bariba group.

2. Reverend Samuel Johnson's rejection of the Arabia/Mecca link and his argument of possible connection between Yoruba Coptic Christian, Nimrod, or Upper Egypt (see Johnson, p. 7).

3. The issue of religion or worship that can be traced to the origin of the Yoruba; oral tradition shows that they began as worshipers of several gods and deities (see Courlander, p. 21).

Again, these origin stories enable the Yoruba to refrain from being obstinate about what they bring into their religion, culture, or way of life, provided such forms can be nativized or indigenized. Such incorporation does not threaten their sense of Yorubaness, their family solidarity, or their community identity. It is interesting to note that some important Yoruba oral traditions were indigenized from neighboring oral cultures. One important example is the *Egungun* masquerade cult among the Yoruba[3**]. Samuel Johnson posited that *Egungun* originated from Nupe country. He said the interaction between the Nupe and the Yoruba resulted in the introduction of the cult to the Yoruba country. However, Samuel Johnson's contention is controversial because of the degree to which the *Egungun* cult has been in the Yoruba culture. Another historian, S.F. Nadel (1954), believed otherwise. He said that masquerade worshipers in Nupeland were the Nupe-ized Yoruba. Oludare Ọlajubu (1970), a Yoruba folklorist and professor of Yoruba literature,

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[3**] A version of the next eight paragraphs has been published in Na'Allah 1996. "The Origin of Egungun: A Critical Literary Appraisal." *African Study Monographs*. 59-68.

supported Nadel, arguing that the Yoruba nation originated, owned, and spread the *Egungun* cult in its country. It will be interesting to examine the arguments of the two camps and research our own sources to investigate argument is more authentic. While helping to throw more light on contemporary Yoruba culture, such an examination will also demonstrate the kind of controversy that can be generated whenever one attempts to create division or tension by questioning the authenticity of the origin of a local element.

The Nupe are said to have migrated to Nigeria approximately a century before the Uthman Danfodio Jihad (Nadel, 1942). They first settled on the hills of Lokoja and later moved left of the bank of the new Lokoja (founded by the Niger Company) where they have remained since. They are called various names by various people (recall our previous discussion regarding the Hausa's name, Yarriba). The Yoruba called them Tapa, and the Kankanda called them Anupewayi. Locally, however, the language is called Nupe and the people are Nupeci or, in the plural, Nupecizi. Like in all African traditions, the Nupecizi are very religious people. They believe in the all-mighty and all-powerful *Soko*, God, and commune with Him through the intermediary of divinities, i.e. *Kuti* (Awolalu and Dopemu, 1979). As I will discuss later in this chapter, no historic account presents anything contrary to the widely-held belief that the Nupecizi, before Islam, were worshippers of traditional masquerade divinities. They are noted, also, for powerful witchcraft. Today, however, over ninety percent of them are Muslims. Islam, however, has not been able to completely replace traditional religious practice among them. Many Nupecizi remain firm in their allegiance to their gods and remain actively involved in masquerade and witchcraft performances. For example, during annual traditional festivals in Lafiagi and Pategi which I have personally witnessed, for example, masquerade performers continue to engage in public displays at community

centers and King's palaces. Notable families identified as custodians of these deities still exist in all Nupe-speaking communities in Nigeria.

Written documents explaining the Nupe theory on the origin of *Egungun* are rare. My interviews with three native speakers have revealed that the Nupecizi themselves have a very interesting continuing oral tradition that presents the Nupe theory on the origin of masquerades. Three people,[2] aged 70, 72, and 35, have all narrated to me that foa a long time during the presence of the Nupecizi on earth, the menfolk decided to plan strategies that would ensure security for the people and properties in the community. They wanted their strategies to be kept secret and therefore decided to meet at night. They kept women and children out of the meeting, believing that they could easily reveal their plans. However, each time a particular woman fought with her husband, she mocked him, referring boldly to his contributions to the menfolk's secret deliberations. The news soon spread among the menfolk and they decided to find out how the woman got her information. The oracle told them that this woman changed into a cat and always attended their meetings. True enough, the cat appeared during the following three meetings, and all their efforts to kill it were abortive. Each time they attempted to capture the cat, it disappeared into thin air. The men changed their meeting schedule to once weekly. The day before the meeting, some men put on masques and covered themselves with dark (sometimes red or pink) clothes. They scared women and children away, some holding canes. Some of the men were tall, some short. This developed into what is now a religious tradition of tall and short masquerades among the Nupecizi.

Although Samuel Johnson did not recount the above tradition, he strongly asserted that the *Egungun* cult started in Nupe country:

> The first Alapini with the other *Egungun* priests, the Elefi, Ọlọhan, Ọlọba, Aladafa, and the Ọlọjẹ, emigrated from the Tapa country to Yoruba, joining the remnants returning from Bariba country. (p. 160)

Alapini was the head in the hierarchy of *Egungun* priests, and together, they came in a "colonization" expedition and found fertile soil in Yoruba country. Johnson said these same priests instructed the Yoruba in the *Egungun* worship and that the Tapa must be given credit for the introduction of *Egungun* into Yorubaland. The Nupecizi took over the Yoruba's country, forcing the Alafin, the King of Ọyọ, to escape to Gbere in Bariba country (Johnson, p. 159). It would not be surprising if the Nupecizi seized the opportunity of their occupation of the Yoruba nation to introduce their traditional religious practices, including the worship of *Egungun*. And because Yoruba culture, just like the Nupe and the Baruba culture, is an active orality, it is much easier for the community to indigenize the *Egungun* tradition and leave it without much trace to its original root. Among the many arguments that are often put forward to debunk the purported Nupe origin of the *Egungun* was S.F. Nadel's insistence that the only worshipers of *Egungun* among the Nupecizi were the Nupe-ized Yoruba. He had reached this conclusion after his various encounters with many Nupecizi who informed him, "no--we have none of this, only Yoruba do it ..." (1942: 16).

Oludare Ọlajubu (1970) supported Nadel's claims. He believed any opposite argument was obscure, and he recounted various Yoruba oral traditions that accounted for the origin of *Égungun* among the Yoruba. The first was that it was traceable to Ile-Ifẹ, and that "all Awo, that is all secret knowledge, had a common origin; they were all born at the creation of the

world at Ile-Ifẹ" (Ọlajubu, 1980: 389). Another was a myth about two children (one farmer, the other singer/dancer) of the same parent. The singer/dancer's fine clothes attracted many people. He was embarrassed, pulled a veil over his face and clothes over his head. He thus became the *Egungun*. Another myth said that the Alapini[3], a most senior chief in Ọyọ, had three children: Ọjẹwumi, Ọjẹsanmi, and Ijẹrinlo. These children disobeyed him by eating the *Ihobia*, a kind of yam. They became thirsty, went to the stream, and, one after the other, drank and fell dead. The *Ifá*, Yoruba god of divination, agreed to reincarnate them. On the seventh day, they were back to life but had to veil their faces because they "were terrible to look at."

There were a few other myths, similar to the ones above. As Awolalu (1979: 65-66) said, Yoruba worshipped *Egungun* as *ára ọ̀rún*, the one from heaven, who came to look after his children. He cured them of illness and gave barren women children. The accounts given to support the Yoruba origin of *Egungun* are not sufficient. These accounts lack rigid substance and unity. Every source (on Yoruba *Egungun* in general) seems simply to have oversimplified his story in an effort to say "this mystery must be demystified." It seems an exaggeration to me to expect, for example, a sudden appearance of a well-known (common) singer/dancer (however gorgeously dressed) to start a religion, cult, and annual festival as strong as the *Egungun* cult and festival in Yoruba, just like that!

In the *Dàdàkúàdá* songs, any member of the audience whose ancestral origin can be traced to Nupe country is praised as *ọ́mọ́ Tapa tí ò leegún nlé*, meaning "an offspring of Tapa who has no *Egungun* in his house." This is an ironic statement. It is believed that every Tapa home must, of cultural necessity, have an *Egungun*. However, with the coming of Islam, this

tradition gradually died out. And so a good Nupe Muslim home is today without the *Egungun*. Such a Muslim is therefore so presented in oral poetry in order to show the degree of his faith in Islam. Such verse is evident in the following *Dàdàkúàdá* songs:

Ayinla Olowo ẹniwa,
Afinju oniburẹdi ọrẹ mi,
Ọmọ Tapa ti o leegun nle;
Ọmọ Tapa, ọkọ mi,
Oni burẹdi tin dun yungba. (Omoekee Amao, Field Performance, Ile Alhaji Raimi Iyanda, Ọmọda, June 1987)

Ayinla Olowo, our man,
My friend the famous bread dealer,
The offspring of Tapa who has no *Egungun* in his house,
The offspring of Tapa, my husband
The sweet bread dealer.

Ni'jọ'hun mo r'ọrẹẹ mi,
Alhaji Abudu Ọmọluabi makudi,
Ọmọluabi, atẹrẹ kan sanma ti n wu yan
Ọrẹ mi Abudu ọmọ Tapa ti o leegun nle. (Jaigbade Alao, Field Performance, Popoigbono, January 1987)

That day I saw my friend,
Alhaji Abudu a decent rich man
A decent slim-touching-the-sky man whom we love
The child of Tapa who has no *Egungun* at home.

Laila ila Allahu,
Ẹman gbọ bi oku ewurẹ
Bin ti n f'ọhun bi eniyan
Ejirẹ oo
Adisa agan

Adisa ọmọ Tapa ti o leegun nle. (Odolaye Arẹmu, "Shehu Shagari Geri Ijọba." Ariyọ Sound A SSLP 058A, 1979)

There is no deity worthy of worship except Allah
Do hear how dead goat
Speaks like a human being!
Oh Ejirẹ
Adisa agan
Adisa, the offspring of Tapa who has no *Egungun* in his house.

In all of the above performances, a Tapa person is the subject of the oral performer's adoration, and he is always praised as *ọ́mọ́ Tapa tí ò leegún nlé*. It is clear, therefore, that S.F. Nadel's and Oludare Ọlajubu's contention that *Egungun* originated in Yoruba country is far from right. As an imperialist anthropologist, not only is Nadel unable to comprehend the realities of the traditional African oral culture, but he also allowed himself to be mislead by his "selected" sources who, he claimed, denounced the Nupe origin of *Egungun*. As for Ọlajubu, it is interesting to notẹ that while denying the Nupe origin of *Egungun*, he accepted that *Agàn*, a spirit, carried by *Ijímèrè* (a part of the *Egungun* cult) "was a native of Ilodo somewhere in the Nupe country" (1970: 15). How could such an important part of the *Egungun* originate from Nupe country while *Egungun* itself took root from the Yoruba nation!

The interaction in the open market and other similar areas between the Yoruba and the Nupecizi has never been contested by anyone. Evidence abounds today that many Nupecizi have been Yoruba-nized. The massive Yoruba-nization of the Nupecizi shows that many aspects of the Nupe religion have also been Yoruba-nized. Nadel himself talks of a large

percentage of Nupecizi that have been, in his words, "completely Yoruba-nized today in language, customs and every habit" (1942: 16).

The many contentions among contemporary writers on Yoruba language about the actual language of the *Egungun* are also evidence of how deeply an oral culture indigenizes similar oral concepts and forms. Ulli Beier (see Ọlajubu, 1970: 8-14), for example, asserts that the *Egungun* language is a "ventriloquist trick" on the people. Oludare Ọlajubu disagrees with this view. He maintains that *Egungun* spoke in imitation of a brown monkey, *Ìjímèrè*, and in true representation of a "dead one that is returning to the world" (1970: 8-14). This kind of controversy is not present in the Nupe culture about cultic masquerades. I strongly posit that because the first *Egungun* among the Yoruba was Nupe, the language spoken by that *Egungun* was the Nupe language. The Yoruba population obviously could not understand it, thus a few members of the cult who spoke Yoruba translated the *Egungun*'s message into Yoruba. As a carry-over of this tradition today, therefore, a monkey-like language is adopted by the Yoruba *Egungun* and a member of the cult translates the message to the audience. I have gone this far in discussing the *Egungun* connection in Yoruba culture to show how receptive oral cultures are to other oral cultures, and the kind of conflict that may ensue not in an effort to "force" other cultures on the native culture, but to discriminate against the "foreign." In other words, the relationship here is not "I" or "we" vs. "Other". It is a "we" and "we", greater than "I/we" and "thou" relationship. Multiculturalism in New World nations lacks this relationship, and thus lives every day in cultural tensions. Active orality society is more vibrant and more receptive of other cultures; it does not give up its own identity to them, but it "welcomes" them into its house and

makes them natives of its country. We will discuss this further later in this chapter.

How do the multicultural formulations of the New World societies, brought about by the pre- and post-World War II waves of immigration, migration, placement, and displacement (see Abu-Laban, 1995: 98-9), compare with the inherently plural and multi-ethnic realities of the Yoruba and indeed of African oral societies? Nigeria alone has about 400 exclusively intelligible languages, and each language has many dialects. What can the written, high-tech, and cyberspace cultures of the late twentieth and twenty-first century West learn from indigenous cultures of Africa, specifically from the concept and practice of Yoruba intrinsic cultural plurality? Having lived and studied in Canada, and keenly observed and in some cases participated in, for four years now, the various multicultural activities of government, schools, community associations, and individuals, I am eager to compare notes, in some detail, between what I recognize as cultural pluralism in an active oral society of African and the written culture of my current abode. I realize that as I will eventually teach in the West, the questions I must be able to answer will include how the inherent cultural plurality of my African society compares to the Western multiculturalism, and whether scholars are right to apply Western concept of multiculturalism in discussing the active orality culture of the multi-ethnic Africa.

As we enter the twenty-first century, Yoruba oral performances still show that Yoruba culture has not lost its identity, notwithstanding decades of Western influence on its spaces. In performative songs and poetry, oral festivals, and dramatic and narrative forms, the Yoruba continue to project their socio-cultural lives. My intention here is to examine some Yoruba folktales and to define, within the scope of Yoruba orality, the idea of

inherent pluri-culture or cultural pluralism in an oral society. How does Yoruba cultural reality compare to contemporary multiculturalism in the New Worlds? The West, represented by New World societies, Canada and the United States, and Australia, Argentina, Britain, etc., battles with multicultural conflict which results from a contest for ethnic nationalism. The New Worlds, or "written societies", as I like to call them, live daily in hotbeds of ethno-cultural tensions as different racial, language, and cultural groups continue the battle to retain their cultural identity while also cooperating with the general idea of a new nationhood. Ian Angus (1997: 143), summarizing what some critics consider as the situation of such crisis, explains thus:

> It is notable that critiques of multiculturalism, both in Canada and elsewhere, almost always take this rhetorical form: "what's the point of stressing our differences? They're all in the past (or destructive, or irrelevant). What's important is that we're all Canadians (or Australians, or Argentinians, or Americans, etc.)." That is, multicultural affiliations are experienced as *competing with* national ones, which implies that they are seen as being in *the same domain of relevance*. It does seem that a weak sense of national identity was historically necessary for the practice of multiculturalism to appear in English Canada in its particularly strong form. (pp. 143-4)

Written society's views of culture, nation, and identity are different from the common understanding of the same issues in an oral culture such as, for instance, Yoruba. Culture, religion, and identity are major issues to an oral person, and the modern nation-state, though important, is not considered of greater significance. Rather, the Yoruba oral culture or ethnicity (like all others) demands respect from the modern nation state, and this respect is not the type a Western person calls so; it is reverence, and recognition, and a more-than-life treatment. Before European colonization of Africa, there was

no separation between state and culture, between identity and state, and between religion and cultural practices. The word used by the Yoruba to denote "government" is *Ìjọ-Ọba*, meaning "a collection or meeting of kings and chiefs." This reality continues strongly in most African traditions today, and Kwame Anthony Appiah's narrative about his late father's funeral is a good example. Apart from his father's will and the codicil appended to it about his wishes for his burial, and maybe the involvement of the church, every other element of that experience was completely oral, and even the Wesley Methodist Church was brought to kneel before the custodian of Ashanti's traditions (Appiah, 1992: 181-92). Even though some modern African leaders and law makers may project the Western notion of nationhood onto their people, I wish to boldly say that an oral person feels that this is contrary to the reality of his existence. I also want to hasten to say that although Ian Angus's expectations about multiculturalism in New World societies are laudable, I doubt whether his definition of "multiculturalism as a social ideal" has contemporary Europe and America in mind, or whether the "social ideal" of multiculturalism is ever attainable in, for example, English Canada:

> Multiculturalism as a social ideal is about how to conduct oneself in a society constituted by a pluri-cultural context and how to design a concept of national identity that is inclusive of the plurality of traditions. (Angus, p. 140)

Because New World societies are basically immigrant societies, the polemic surrounding multiculturalism in the West is reduced to what ethnic group settles there first, or what race has the majority of a country's population.

Raymond Breton (1989: 150) itemizes the main reasons that promoted multiculturalism in Canada starting with the 1960s:

> 1. Massive immigration: between 1945 and 1961, over two million legal immigrants entered Canada. This increased the weight of the non-British, non-French component of the population.
> 2. This period also witnessed rapid economic growth. The abundance generated had the effect, I believe, of decreasing the saliency of class interest and consequently allowed other lines of social differentiation to come to the foreground.
> 3. A third phenomenon was the considerable expansion of the involvement of the state in all areas of social life. The state became considerably more activist, and it was virtually inevitable that its intervention would include the ethnocultural field.
> 4. Corresponding to the increase in state activism, there was a considerable increase in the sociopolitical mobilization of various social groups. The 1960s and early 1970s was a period of great "social ferment," a phenomenon that occurred not only in Canada but in the United States, Europe, and other parts of the world.
> 5. Perhaps the phenomenon that had the most impact in putting ethnicity on the public agenda was the rise of a new Quebec nationalism and especially the emergence of the independentist movement in that province. This movement forced a reconsideration of the character of Canadian society; it led the national elites to a reshaping of national institutions. This reconstruction process raised the question of the place of the "other ethnic groups" in the evolving Canadian configuration. The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism acted as the principal crystalizer in this collective *prise de conscience*.
> 6. The increased demographic weight and corresponding political importance of the non-British/non-French element in Canadian society and the rise of the independentist movement in Quebec increased the saliency for Canadian society of the demise of the British Empire. Canada could define itself less and less in relation to that empire. This was not a new phenomenon, but its reality imposed itself forcefully on the national consciousness at the end of World War II.

Basically in Canada and the United States, the debate is between English-Canadians, Anglo-Americans, and the Other; the Other being Africans, Indians, Russians, Ukranians, Mexicans, and this Other does not even include

the aboriginals who are the original inhabitants of the so-called "New" World societies, and who, we may argue, are currently treated as less than "Other" in the debate. For example, in Canada, the issues have always centered around English Canada, French Canada, and even with these two groups the multicultural debate, as shown by Angus, has always been English Canada vs. the Other or French Canada vs. the Other, what they call "multiculturalism within [a] bilingual framework" (Angus, 141). Angus states further:

> The post-colonial phase of Canadian history has increasingly criticized privileging the British connection and asserted the multiple immigrant origins of all Canadians. As a consequence, there is a duality inherent in the popular term "ethnics" because of the conditions of its emergence. The term "ethnics" can refer to all those of non-British origin, as it once did, meaning more or less "those who are not like us," or, to the extent that the privileged British connection fades, it can refer to the "ethno-cultural roots of whatever group," including English Canadians. (pp. 141-2)

From Augus's observations we can clearly understand that the word "ethnic" in one of its meanings refers to the ethno-cultural roots of any group. However, usages of the same word in contemporary Western multiculturalisms may have little respect for this meaning. For example, it is not often that English Canada refers to itself as "ethnic." The word is beginning to seem disdainful, and almost looks like the word always used for the American Indian and African language groups in Western media: tribes or tribal people! "Ethnic" in the New World society today, as far as I can see, is beginning to mean the Other, as one may easily see in the course contents of Ethnic Studies programs in North American Universities. It is a power game, and the majority may be said to have redefined the word to mean "minority groups". Can the term "ethnic", with all its current seeming

derogatory significations (it may now begin to seem less "civilized" to refer to oneself as "ethnic"!), continue to be used for all groups into the twenty-first century or will it finally stop, for example, in Canada, to include French, and Anglo-Canadian groups and be solely used for Others? Whatever happens to such a word in future, could the majority groups in the New World of the next century, e.g, the English and French Canadians, see themselves as Other in any possible way? To think that English Canada could easily be counted as the Other is simply a joke. Two things could make this happen, but I strongly believe that neither is visible under today's sun. The first one is if other ethnic groups (two or three, not just one group) like the Indians, the Russians, the Ukranians, the Jews, the Chinese individually increase in number and become more populous than Anglo-Canadians, then Anglo-Canadians may begin to feel what it is to be a minority. Since there will then be a possibility for these ethnic groups to increase their representation in Parliament, they may easily constitute a majority in the government. The second reason is if the Canadian Federal Parliament passes a bill by a two thirds majority pronouncing English Canadian "Other." Yes, it looks senseless to those who have power to willingly commit a power suicide (see Goldenberg, 1989: 137), to give up their privilege, doesn't it? But multiculturalism in New World societies is a creation of the law, and not a spontaneous or natural course of events. Today Hispanic Americans are acquiring a significant portion of the American population, and calls have been made for the use of Spanish in American schools. However, the various pronouncements of American law makers--Republicans and Democrats--show that the United States Congress would not pass such a "foolish" law and thus willingly make it possible for English America to become one of the Other in the twenty-first century. Pat

Buchanan and Bob Dole, both Republican Party presidential candidates, made the issue of the English language in America a 1996 republican presidential election campaign issue. In 1997 when a United States county schools board passed a law recognizing Ebonics as a black language "for teacher's consideration in teaching", and not as a replacement of English as a language of instruction in school, President Clinton, a Democrat president, was the first to condemn it and to announce publicly the federal government's intention to frustrate its implementation. This may be a good lesson to Latinos that their predicted impending majority population over blacks in America may not help the Spanish language question in America. The Anglo-conformity, or assimilation wave, in America is not about to disappear, despite Peter Rose's (1989: 154-5) prediction of the reduction in "the salience of white ethnicity" in the year 2000. According to Rose "the principal tensions in 2000 will not be between Black and White in our society but between the White or Anglo community and the Hispanic ones" (p. 156).

There is a difference between the Western idea of multiculturalism and what I call cultural pluralism in Africa. Active orality of Africa brings about a faster, easier and more beneficial interaction of cultures without any necessity for parliamentary legislation or a modern African presidential interference. In Europe and America government intervention is necessary to ensure that multiculturalism thrives and to reduce multicultural tension. The point is that because the West is a written world, a cyberworld, and a high-tech world, cultural interaction cannot be left to "the forces of nature" as people meet more through the pages of papers than through physical contact. The electronic orality of telephone, radio, and television satisfies, in all respects, my definition of passive orality of the New World societies because it does not, in any way, help interpersonal and intergroup contacts[4]

or the face-to-face orality such as we have in the active orality of, for example, Kenya or Uganda.

Through legislation, the American and or Canadian governments attempt, respectively, to "help" foster multiculturalism. Some of the ways in which multiculturalism is ensured in New World nations are:

1. LEGAL IMMIGRATION (as in USA and Canada. The American government even has a lottery program aiming at encouraging immigration to the country).
2. EDUCATION.
3. CULTURAL CELEBRATION (multicultural days, etc. like Heritage Days in Edmonton, Alberta).

As we can understand from Breton's summary cited earlier in this chapter, the 1967 report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in Canada principally encouraged the introduction of a multicultural policy in 1971, aiming at assisting non-Anglo and non-Franco Canadians to "integrate" into the Canadian society. However, it must be emphasized that whereas the idea was supposed to help the minority ethnic Canadians to retain their culture, it was, more than anything else, intended to "assimilate" them into one of the dominant Canadian cultures, English, or French. This is how Huguette Labelle (1989) summarizes the major objectives of the Canadian multicultural policies:

> 1. To permit cultural groups to retain and foster their identity.
> 2. To assist cultural groups to overcome barriers to their full participation in Canadian society.

3. To promote creative exchanges and interchanges among all Canadian cultural groups.

4. To help newcomers acquire at least one of the official languages.

(p. 3)

The above objectives are largely similar to those of the United States government in many of its multicultural laws (see Rose, pp. 153-7). Yet, on language, as seen in objective No. 4 above, Canada seems to encourage immigrants to forego their languages for one of the two Canadian official languages, English or French, and thus take up what can be called a Canadian identity. However, it is only logical that the immigrants can no longer maintain their culture where they are unable to maintain their language. Just as Jean Burnet observes, "a culture could not live unless the language that was its essential expression remained rich and vital" (14). Yet, a Canadian Prime Minister was reported to have said, in 1971:

> "[A]lthough there are two official languages, there is no official culture, nor does any ethnic group take precedence over any other. No citizen or group of citizens is other than Canadian, and all should be treated fairly." (qtd. in Labelle, p. 2; also see Abu-Laban, p. 101)

There is no doubting the government's intention in Canada, in the United Sates, and in other countries of the New World, to make the non-British immigrants (and non-French ones in Canada) "feel at home" in their new societies. Every year large sums of money are spent on programs to help immigrants adjust to the life of their new communities. The question is: are those "adjustment programs" the type that will help the immigrant to retain his culture and identity? The following is how Huguette Labelle describes such programs:

> There are, of course, limits to the activities of the multicultural program, less perhaps through the size of its staff and its budget than through the need to move prudently in concert with community advice. Nevertheless, a number of other interesting activites have been launched. Assistance has been given to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) for a training program for members of visible minorities. A study was made on audience reaction to the CBC drama "Reasonable Force" about the harassment of a Sikh family. The Ontario Federation of Labour received a grant for an advertising program on the theme "Racism Hurts Everyone." The National Film Board received financing to produce a film by a black film maker about Caribbean Canadians in North York. Funding has made it possible for many multicultural organizations to carry out media sensitization seminars. An innovative police training program has been conducted as a pilot project in Vancouver, and an international seminar is being planned on policing in multicultural and multiracial communities. The Canadian Jewish Congress has received funds to develop a legal-aid manual for community groups combating racism. (Labelle, p. 5)

Despite all the monies, all the efforts, and all the laws or policies, multiculturalism in New World societies remains tension-ridden, minority ethnic groups struggle to assert their identities, and dominant groups work hard to retain their perceived national identity (i.e., English and French identities in Canada, English in the USA) rather than be open to multi-ethnic and cultural identities that one might expect in a society that calls itself multicultural. But multiculturalism in the New Worlds means, "many cultures with one language." That is what these countries have provided in their many multicultural laws and policies.

In other words, these policies have achieved basically what the Western multiculturalism intends them to achieve, not plurality but singularity or difference (I will return to the issues of "difference" later), not mutual respect but disagreements and cultural tension between the

dominant group(s) and the Other ethnic groups. In Canada and the United States in 1998, opposition political parties--e.g. the Reform Party in Canada and the Republican Party in the United States--constantly criticized their countries' immigration policies, and some are now asking for a freezing of immigration to the two countries respectively for a certain number of years. I have personally participated in Heritage day presentations in some Edmonton and suburban public schools for four years (we shall return to this later), and every time I became more convinced that multiculturalism in the West is only about the rhetoric of difference. I became more and more certain that arguments such as Bisoondath's in *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada* (1994) is winning the day, rather than losing it. Angus paraphrases Bissoondath's main contentions that

> he has personally been ghettoized and that Canada has deprived itself of a national identity as a result of multiculturalism. 'To pretend that one has not evolved, as official multiculturalism so often seems to demand of us, is to stultify the personality, creating stereotype, stripping the individual of uniqueness: you are not yourself, you are your group. (Angus, p. 145)

Basically, therefore, multiculturalism in New World societies is about differences, not similarities. Because of the forces of "individual personality" that Bisoondath refers to above, multiculturalism in the West continues to be defined, notwithstanding what Angus wishes for (see pp. 144-6), by the modernist drive for individualism and by Western capitalist ideals. In terms of the capitalist ideal, important parts of the requirements for immigration to Canada include the amount of money the immigrant brings and/or the amount of formal learning he has attained, thus continually drawing the best brains and riches out of the Old Worlds, and showing the capitalistic ferocity

of the New World societies. Regarding issues of individualism, similarity or difference, the following narration about a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) television discussion on multiculturalism in Canada is noteworthy:

> A CBC television news special on multiculturalism in 1994 insisted on the same rhetoric. At the beginning of the show, the moderator described multiculturalism as being about "acceptance, accommodation and, of course that most Canadian concept of all, compromise" and went on to refer to "what many believe multiculturalism should be: a search for our similarities, not a promotion of separateness." The important word here is "not." It is this little word that rejects the possibility that multiculturalism might be a search for both our similarities and differences, that it might be a way of working out within our own social and political history the dialectic of "identity and difference," within which all social identity operates. It must be recalled that this rhetorical position is not merely that of a contributor to the debate. It is articulated by the moderator prior to his turning to commentators and remains as a structuring assumption throughout. Later, when Harron Siddiqui, editor of the *Toronto Star*, was trying unsuccesfully to escape the logic impossed by the rhetoric of opposition, the moderator asked if he agreed with the statement of one of his opponents that multiculturalism "is about separateness, not about similarity." Various positions were debated, but the assumptions of rhetoric of opposition were, if not exactly mandatory, impossible to question or reject within the confines of the show. (Angus, p. 145)

It is impossible to avoid the issue of difference or separateness while discussing contemporary Western multiculturalism. The practicality of multiculturalism in New World societies, as far as my own experience in Canada has shown me, is that even young people in high school think of differences, rather than similarities, and act out the tension which they have perhaps unconsciously experienced whenever multiculturalism is a subject of discussion in their homes, with their parents, or on the television. They have

been fed with so many stereotypical ideas that their minds have been prepared to believe that other cultures are like bad air that pollutes their "pure" civilizations. This is especially true about Africa and ideas that those people who "live in trees" have hardly any "decent" lives outside of interacting with animals, and thus behave as if they themselves were animals. A good example comes from one of the schools where for four years I gave talks and made presentations on Nigerian culture. The school is an Alberta public school called La Point School, Beaumont, and most of my presentations were to grade 7 students, taking place every year for between ten and twelve classes, with each class containing an average of twenty students. I was always astonished about the amount of interest the students showed in hearing my cultural talk, and in participating in my folktales sessions. Perhaps I learned the most from the kind of questions they repeatedly asked me, and in four years of meeting different students, many of those questions never changed: Why did you come to Canada? Will you go back to your country? What kind of food do you eat in Nigeria? Do lions (sometime elephants) hear your language, and can you hear theirs? How do about 400 language groups live together? What is the common form of greeting in Nigeria? Is Yoruba (sometimes Hausa, Igbo) a language just like English?

I tried my best to answer these questions by explaining the inherent commonalty among people, and how Nigerians come to Canada and Canadians go to Nigeria, although for different purposes. However it has always been clear to me that what their minds have been prepared to hear, certainly not by their school but by their homes and by society at large, are answers resulting from differences between them as Canadians and myself as a Nigerian. In a rural school, I understand why the population of non-

white students is insignificant, but the point is that virtually all the classes I attended had a number of non-White Canadians. Being immersed in a community just a few kilometers away from Edmonton (Edmonton is the capital of the Province of Alberta, and is made up of about 800 thousand people), it is certain that the students in La Pointe School are not unfamiliar with the multi-ethnic face of Canada, and that although I am a Nigerian, I may have taken a permanent residency in Canada. Asking, I realized that the students knew well that their parents were British, American, or Scottish, etc. Once in another Edmonton school in 1996, I asked a black grade 8 student where he came from and he said to me: "My parents are from Ghana, but I am a Canadian." I got the same answer from another student, grade 7, in the same school, except that her mother was a white Canadian. I was impressed by these students' sense of Canadian identity, but I wondered in my mind how the multicultured and the hybrid are treated by the other white students, mainly Anglo-Canadians. In other words, the student with Ghanaian mother and father I considered multicultural, and the one with black father and white mother, hybrid. Certainly this type of situation is limited among the Yoruba, especially in Yoruba oral communities. It is possible to see cross-cultural marriages between the Yoruba and the English or French among middle class Yoruba, in Nigerian Universities and business communities, etc., but such marriages do very little to change or influence changes in oral communities. In Kwame Appiah's book, *In My Father's House*, we are not told what changes Kwame Anthony Appiah's mother, a Briton married to a Ghanaian, brought about in the Asante community into which she is married. Hardly is her name mentioned in any of the controversies following her husband's death; rather, "we want to keep mother out of this" is the song that seems to come repeatedly from her

children's mouths (pp. 181-192). In Appiah's Preface to the book, the first time he refers to his mother is in relation to her garden, "my mother's garden" (p. vii), and later the writer shows how his mother actively interacted with the oral community:

> In our house, my mother was visited regularly by Muslim Hausa traders from what we called (in the phrase that struck my childhood ear as wonderfully mysterious, exotic in its splendid vagueness) "the North." These men knew she was interested in seeing and, sometimes, in buying the brass weights the Asante had used for weighing gold; goldweights they had collected from villages all over the region, where they were being sold by people who had no use for them anymore, now that paper and coin had replaced gold dust as currency. And as she collected them, she heard more and more of the folklore that went with them; the proverbs that every figurative goldweight elicited; the folktales, *Ananseasɛm*, that the proverbs evoked ... We loved the stories--my sister now read the ones that my mother has published to my nephews in Gaborone and in Lagos; my godchildren read them here in America--and we grew to love the goldweights and the carvings that the traders brought. (pp. vii-iii)

That his mother collected and published Asante folktales is strong evidence of her interaction with the people and of the "nativization" (we shall discuss this concept further later) process she went through into the Asante, her husband's culture. There are examples of similar situations, in which Whites have undergone similar processes in the Yoruba oral community. Perhaps the best example is that of an Austrian, Suzzanne Wenger, who was actually initiated into Yoruba culture, became a worshipper of Yoruba gods of *Ọbàtálá* and *Alajere*, and plays an important role as *Iya Ọ̀ṣún*, Chief Priestess, in the traditional *Ọ̀ṣún Òṣogbo* annual festival (see Na'Allah, 1995: 103-4). Not only did Wenger become an indigene of the *Ọ̀ṣún* oral community, her artistic creations were "nativized" (I intend to carry the

concept of "nativization" further later). Although Appiah's mother did not do as much as Wenger, she did what many Whites who live in African active orality communities do, and the oral performers responded to her in kind, as any traditional oral culture will treat any woman or man interested in an oral performance according to relevant traditional custom. In the same vein, Appiah and his sisters, though products of a white-black mixed marriage, are not hybrids. Appiah demonstrated in his book how Asante he is, far from the possible hybridity of my earlier Canadian example, also of a Ghanaian father. What the oral culture made of Kwame Appiah, thousands of pages of written cultural texts, including actively reading stories such as the ones Appiah's godchildren read in America, can never make of a child born of African parents residing in America or Canada, although those children remain evidence of American and Canadian multiculturalism in the New World societies in which they live.

There are so many similarities in oral culture that what happens among the Yoruba could easily happen among the Asante, or the Ga, or the Zulu in South Africa. Later on in this work I shall discuss how traditional oral performances and rituals from a different oral culture easily become nativized into Yoruba culture. In my Yoruba oral world, an "active orality" world, people "see" similarities and commonalties in their assessment of plurality, and I believe that this is so in many active African orality cultures. However, I am surprized, for example, that Kwame Appiah (1992) imposes another multicultural doctrine on his discussion of African culture. He says that, "nothing should be more striking for someone without preconceptions than the extraordinary diversity of Africa's peoples and its cultures" (p. 24). Yet, his example is his visit to Botswana where, he says, the landscape, "the material culture", and the men's dresses were unfamiliar to him (p. 24). I

believe that Appiah, in noticing the differences, had preconceptions and was practically out to look for differences rather than for similarities. He says later in that chapter:

> Compare Evans-Pritchard's famous Zande oracles, with their simple questions and their straightforward answers, with the fabulous richness of Yoruba oracles, whose interpretation requires great skill in the hermeneutics of the complex corpus of verses of Ifa; or our own Asante monarchy, a confederation in which the king is primus inter pares, his elders and paramount chiefs guiding him in council, with the more absolute power of Mutesa the First in nineteenth-century Buganda; or the enclosed horizons of a traditional Hausa wife, forever barred from contact with men other than her husband, with the open spaces of the women traders of southern Nigeria; or the art of Benin--its massive bronzes--with the tiny elegant goldweight figures of the Akan. Face the warrior horsemen of the Fulani jihads with Shaka's Zulu impis; taste the bland foods of Botswana after the spices of Fanti cooking; try understanding Kikuyu or Yoruba or Fulfude with a Twi dictionary. Surely differences in religion ontology and ritual, in the organization of politics and the family, in relations between the sexes and in art, in styles of warfare and cuisine, in language--surely all these are fundamental kinds of differences? (p. 25)

The question in Nigerian oral cultures, especially Hausa and Yoruba oral cultures which I have personally experienced, and I believe in most African oral societies, is never whether or not there is diversity, or whether or not there are differences in oracles and oracle worshipping, etc. I have already stated, but should re-emphasize, that the Yoruba alone have about 401 gods, and there are major differences and similarities in the worshipping of each of them. Among the Yoruba, as in Hausa and many active orality languages with which I am familiar, there are dialects, and speakers of some dialects barely understand speakers of others. But these are only evidences of the cultural pluralism of the oral society, and not an indication that the people look for or play on such differences in defining

their relationship with each other. For example, oral forms in African oral communities are performance-based: oral narratives, poetry, drama and festivals, are communally performed. Just like an Asante great-aunt would call her nephew with the names of her ancestors, a Yoruba would, as well, by giving to her "nephew," from birth, her own great-grand father's name and by calling him only by that name for as long as she lives. Like the Asante king, the Alafin, among the Ọyọ Yoruba, has the *Ọyọmesi* guiding and advising him in council. The processes of consultation, deliberation, and other oral performances in the palace happen often in Zulu, Yoruba, Hausa, and Nupe palaces, just as they do in an Asante palace. As in the Asante palace, the people present would use the *Káábíèsi* formula if they were the Ọyọs in Alafin's, or Ifẹs in Ọọni's palace; they would prostrate and beg the King to forgive an erring child, just like in the Asante culture. And similarly, the *Olórì* (*Abusua* in Asante; see Appiah 1992, p. 187) would join also, more so if she was the child's great-aunt. Not because she is trying to pretend to be in sympathy with the child, but because tradition requires her to do so. If a person goes to the traditional Hausa market, he will see that they enjoy the same "open spaces" as their Yoruba, Tiv, Okrika, Asante, or Kanuri women. And those who know contemporary Yoruba society well enough as I believe Appiah does know that even in the Yoruba's Ọyọ Alafin there are women who are in "enclosed horizons" and who are "forever barred from contact with men other than [their] husband[s]" (Appiah 1992, p. 25).

I attempted, in my "Introduction" to *Ogoni's Agonies*, to define multiculturalism as a multi-ethnicity of the world, the oral world mixing with the written world in what is now called a "global village". In other words, a multicultural world is like the multicultural United Nations: a comity of nations of the world, each with its own different culture and

language, and where differences, rather than similarities are emphasized. I also defined it with the example of a multiculturalism of English written by some contributors in *Ogoni's Agonies*, as a language which "breathes Euro-American as well as African cultures" (p. 5). The tension that can be observed between the monocultural and the multicultural users of the English language, one claiming the other user inferior or the other English unacceptable, is a good example of the tension in a New World society's multicultural reality. Novelists such as Chinua Achebe, Gabriel Okara, and Amos Tutuọla, among others, brought their indigenous African idioms into English and thus created a love-hate situation in the English world. For years up to the close of the twentieth century, many British and American English speakers would refuse to recognize these African writers' English expressions as deserving of any literary value. Many departments of English would not include their writings as samples of literature in English. My point is that the nature of multiculturalisms in the New World is a love-hate relationship of tension, suspicion, and disrespect. All these negativities are uncommon in the cultural pluralism of an oral society such as that of the Yoruba. This is not to say that there is no conflict in contemporary African communities, but these conflicts have nothing to do with the issue of diversity. Tensions and inter-ethnic wars such as the 1996 genocide in Rwanda and the mistrust among the ethnic groups in 1998 Nigeria are consequences of colonial legacies and contemporary bad leadership in Africa, the neo-colonial tragedy of our day. The haphazard colonial arrangement of African communities into dubious nation-states is not meant to function, and thus for years to come the world will continue to witness more near-severances of these marriages of inconvenience.

It is clear therefore that, using Yoruba oral community as an example, the Western concept of "multiculturality" would not correctly convey the situation in oral Africa (including, especially, contemporary communities outside the urban seats of African neo-colonial governments). My point, as I have mentioned above, is that the hundreds of gods and religions among the Yoruba, and the fact that every adherent worships his god without friction with worshippers of other gods, shows how active orality exists in a peaceful intrinsic cultural plurality. Also *Ifá* (the Yoruba god of divination) may ask any person to sacrifice to or to worship another god, and that person would do so without hesitation. In other words, the idea of plurality is inherent among the Yoruba people, and it is not strange to them that some people would have a different appearance than them, or that some ideas would be completely opposed to theirs, or that some people would choose to present a pluralistic outlook either in their personality, ideas, worship, or any area of human, cultural and spiritual endeavors. Although the Yoruba are a very proud people and will often insist on having a very sophisticated culture, the Yoruba have an oft-used proverb: *ọ́mọ́ tí kò bá de ókó ẹ́lòmíràn ní yo sọ́ wípé kòsi ókó t'ó tó ti Bàbà òhún*, meaning that "a child who has never been to another person's farm boasts that no other farm is as big as his father's." The point is that with anything sophisticated, there's another more sophisticated elsewhere. Although I have heard Yoruba persons refer to some neighboring oral cultures as inferior to the Yoruba, I have yet to see any doctrine in the Yoruba language and culture that conceives others shabbily because of reasons of cultural or racial difference.

Indeed the Yoruba believe in the concept of the *ẹ́lẹ́da*, i.e., the creator, in the idea that every person is created according to the wish of the *ẹ́lẹ́da*, and that it is an insult to the gods, in particular Ọ̀bàtálá whom Yoruba call

the chief architect of human beings, to discriminate against a person because of his physical or biological realities, especially if they are traits he is born with. As Appiah (1992) clearly argues (pp. 3-27; 173-80) about the un-Africanness of Pan-Africanism, a racial basis for a Pan-Africanism would sound very un-cultural to a traditional Yoruba. The Yoruba believe that a person's importance or lack thereof is determined by his *ori*, head or destiny. There is an adage, *àyọ̀nmọ́ ò gbóògùn, órí ẹ́ni làwúre*, meaning that "what a person becomes does not require magic, one's head is his good fortune medicine." The Yoruba also insist that every person has an *ẹ́lẹ́da* spirit, and so even during that person's absence, he should be treated as if he were present whenever anything concerning him is to be done. The Yoruba believe that *bi èníyàn ò sí ní bẹ̀, ẹ́lẹ́da rẹ̀ wà ní bẹ̀*, meaning that "if a person is not there, his *élẹ́da* is there."

Other Yoruba concepts, *ọ́mọ́ ènia*, "human being", and *áye*, "the world," are not defined by race (Gbadegẹsin, pp. 27-59). Yoruba believe in the similarity in human attitude, and they see all human beings as capable of both good and bad acts. And *áye* can be both "the world" as an abstract idea or "human beings/people" as both physical and/or abstract concept. Odolaye Arẹmu, an Ilọrin oral performer, has a very interesting praise poem for *áye*:

Eniyan soro ẹma se f'eniyan sere
N jẹ báa r'eke ó a s'ebẹnire ni (pause)
Aaye e
Eru aaye yi le bami pupọ ọjọ
Ọmọ eeyan ti n gbẹgi togun laasẹ
Aaye n binu kanhun, won da kahun s'omi
Aye n binu iyọ, won dayọ s'eepẹ
Aye n binu Ẹdu ni won ba geka Ẹdu ku kan

People are difficult, please never take people lightly
Whenever we see a cunning person, we think he is a good person
Aayee! This world!
I'm afraid of this world:
The child of a person who cuts the tall tree from its underneath
When the world is annoyed with *kanhun*, potassium, they pour *kanhun* into water
Whenever the world is annoyed with *iyọ*, salt, they pure iyọ on the sand
Whenever the world is annoyed with Ẹdu, they cut all of Ẹdu's fingers but one
(quoted from Na'Allah, 1988: 103)

Odolaye's songs clearly show the Yoruba's understanding of a person's capacity to degenerate into a "human beast." Since he can cut off another person's fingers, and probably kill that person, extrinsic or intrinsic racism, as Appiah calls it whether in apartheid South Africa, America, or Nazi Germany (see Appiah, 1992: 13-17), cannot take the Yoruba aback; to them human beings have innate tendencies which result in the most pusillanimous acts possible. In other words, the Yoruba do not discriminate against people, even regarding this capacity for evil.

Yet, it will be erroneous for me to say that the Yoruba, because he sees humanity as one, has no concept of group identity, such as the Yoruba, the African, or the Black identity. The Yoruba believe strongly in family and group solidarity. The individual, as a member of the family or group, shares the collective identity of his lineage and is expected to safeguard the name and image of his family or lineage. A very important Yoruba adage goes, *t'ẹ́ní n t'ẹ́ní, t'èkisà n t'àátàn*, meaning that "what is yours is [importantly] yours, what's garbage's is [can only be] rags". This adage emphasizes relationships based on family lineage, household, town, or any social group. Every person is expected to watch out for his own group or family member. Although, as I have emphasized before, "race" is not an element of social

recognition among the Yoruba, it is, however, difficult to say whether a Yoruba person will not easily recognize race, such as the Black as *t'ẹ́ní n t'ẹ́ní*; after all, one can argue that people of the same race do have something in common and thus form a group. The Yoruba word that comes close to "race" is *ìrán*, but it may also mean family lineage, such as when it appears in the Yoruba phrase, *àwan ìrán Baba rẹ*, "your father's family lineage." Yet race or racism can come out differently in Yoruba language. The contemporary Yoruba rendition of apartheid or racist government is *ìjọ́bá éléyà-mẹ̀yà*. In this sense *ẹ̀yà* is used to mean discriminating against a skin color different from one's own. However, in Yoruba *ẹ̀yà* traditionally means something separated out for a purpose, not necessarily negative--although it is now difficult to use the English word "discrimination" for anything positive. In Yoruba a person can still say, *o yaa s'ọ̀tọ̀*, or *yíyà s'ọ̀tọ̀*, meaning "he keeps it separately, or the process of separating for recognition/difference;" the root word [*ya*] is open to many usages and meanings, especially as its tone changes: drawing, separating, lending, tearing, branching. The proverbial concept that *b'éwé bá pẹ́ lárá ọ́ṣẹ́, á ď ọ́ṣẹ́*, meaning that "if a leaf stays long enough on the body of soap, it becomes soap," is very popular among the Yoruba and is often used by them to show that any person is capable of gaining a group's or family's acceptance, even if he does not originally belong to that group or was not born into that family.

I disagree with some of Kwame Appiah's assertions on the issue of identity. For example, it may be largely true that race is an unusual basis for identity formation in many oral societies including the Yoruba; nevertheless, the issue of identity is crucial to their sense of pride, and to defining their religious, cultural, and sometimes even economic perspectives. Although they may have only called themselves Ọyọ, Ẹgba,

Ondo, in the past rather than Yoruba (I have discussed the name "Yoruba" in chapter 1), it does not reduce their sense of collective identity. To explain a concept as important as the identity concept among the Yoruba as "an invented history" or as "false presuppositions" (1992: 174) is to miss the point. Even though, as I have already stated, race may not be a yardstick of identity among the Yoruba just as it may not be so among many African cultures, the Yoruba still think that every person deserves an *órukọ́*, name, which is basically the center of every person's, family's, or community's identity. An adage says, *órukọ́ réré sàn jú wúrà ati fàdakà lọ́*, meaning that "a person's good name is more important than gold and silver." Family name is seen as a major factor in family identity and so is jealously guarded. Identity is linked to lineage, to ancestors, and to the very being of each family, and often includes the political and economic realities of their lives. For example among the Yoruba, a Blacksmith, Goldsmith, or a hunter has his profession reflected in his family, lineage names, and praise poetry, as does a warrior, ruler, and traditional care giver or herbalist. In many situations these professions and positions are hereditary, passed from generation to generation. While race may not be central to identity formation among the Yoruba, a Yoruba person is specially empowered by his identity and draws his history and essence from it. African identity may be new; after all, the name "Africa", and its concept as a continent came about only a few centuries ago. Africans themselves are not new to the idea of exploring the advantage of their collective being or their group identity. The Organization of African Unity and all other such continental and regional organizations on the continent are certainly modern, but they do not teach concepts of naming and identifying to Africans. This may be why Appiah misinterprets Achebe's perception of the Igbo identity. Achebe had said:

> "The duration of awareness, of consciousness of an identity, has really very little to do with how deep it is. You can suddenly become aware of an identity which you have been suffering for a long time without knowing. For instance, take the Igbo people. In my area, historically, they did not see themselves as Igbo. They saw themselves as people, from this village or that village. In fact in some place "Igbo" was a word of abuse; they were the "other" people, down in the bush. And yet, after the experience of the Biafran War, during a period of two years, it became a very powerful consciousness. But it was *real* all the time. They all spoke the same language, called "Igbo," even though they were not using that identity in any way. But the moment came when this identity became very powerful ... and over a very short time." (qtd. in Appiah, 1992: 177)

As I understand Achebe, there is nothing "shifting" in the Igbo identity or in their definition of it. Says Achebe about the Igbo: "They all spoke the same language called 'Igbo,' even though they were not using the identity in any way" (qtd. in Appiah, 1992: 177). Whoever is familiar with Igbo history knows that they lived in clans, and so the family, the village, or the clan was the major level of self definition, rather than the "nation."

As is evident in my discussion of the Yoruba, even though they had a Kingdom and a history of living as a nation or empire, the family lineage or the household remains a more important structure of identity. For example, I am writing this work as an Ilọrin, brought up to experience Ilọrin Yoruba oral life (with the advantage of having other sub-group and ethnic experiences), and whatever it entails to be an Ilọrin will be sufficient in defining me, the same way an Ọyọ or Ijẹṣa writer will ask to be seen as what he is. This does not detract from either of us any common definition used for people who speak dialects of this same language and share historical and cultural similarities. And so, as Achebe says, even though the Biafran War became a powerful source of mobilization and solidarity for the Igbo and

their use of the same name for their collective identity, that experience alone, to use Achebe's words, "has very little to do with how deep it is" (qtd. in Appiah, 1992: 177). Because the name Igbo has been used, and because all the people speak the same language (with different dialects of it), what is new to them is the idea of a universal Igbo, or the idea of an Igbo nation which is different from their original clan-structure experience, not the existence, the consciousness or the depth of the identity of their being. Identity and collective or group recognition is therefore not new among the Igbo, as it is not among the Yoruba, Hausa, Fulani, or any one of the 400 language groups in Nigeria.

The concept of *b'ewe bá pẹ́ l'ára ọ̀ṣẹ́, ad'ọ̀ṣẹ́* discussed earlier in this chapter leads to the factors that help the intrinsic cultural plurality to thrive in Yoruba oral society. As a society of active orality, the entire community is exposed to constant oral performances in the marketplace, on the farm, at socio-religious ceremonies, and at village or town squares, and every member of the society grows up recognizing through songs, festivals, and oral narratives, the diversity of his community. The Yoruba people seem to have the most urban African pre-colonial people (with Ifẹ, Ọyọ, Ibadan, etc.). It is an easy certainty to a Yoruba person, for example, that he, by the provision of the inherent Yoruba plurality culture, lives in a world of diversity where he can practice a religion different from the one practiced by his aunt, or that his village or town king can worship one day with a Sango adherent, and the next day with an Ogun worshiper. [5] Because he listens constantly to praise poetry performed by his mother/father or grandparent every morning when he pays them morning homage, and hears a different kind of poetry performed by neighboring young person, he knows that his community is made up of widely diversified lineages. In

her own household she is praised as *Asàbi*, one specially chosen [by her parents] to be born, two other children are praised as *Amàsa*, one whom one comes to know and quickly runs away from, and as *Adùkẹ*, one whom everyone rushes enthusiastically to please. He later realizes that praise names can be even more radically different, such as *Adenikẹ* (from the royal family), *Ogúnmọla* (from the household of Ogun worshippers, *Ayangbèmi* (from the family of oral singers or drummers). He may himself be a speaker of one of the many Yoruba dialects, and he realizes early that there are many varieties of his language, e.g., ẹgba, ijẹbu, ọyọ, ekiti, ijẹṣa, ifẹ, ọffa, ilọrin, and many more. Because it is inherently plural, Yoruba culture has no problem accepting other diversities around it. I have heard a Yoruba professor suggest that the reason Islam and Christianity had no problem winning believers was because the typical Yoruba person thought he was only adding to his list of gods and goddesses! This may explain why many Yoruba people who are Muslims and Christians still worship Yoruba deities (see Idowu, 1962).

The active orality society has no need for laws and for government involvement to ensure a healthy interaction among the many cultures and beliefs within and around the community. The market is an open place, and every marketer opens his stall and advertises aloud in his dialect or language. When the oral singer sings in his community, nothing restricts how loud his voice gets, or who hears him and who does not. He is not a television or radio that can be turned off or thrown out the window. The market-woman's advertisement is not on pages of newspapers or magazines that individuals can read silently and keep to themselves. In active orality society the culture is laid open; an active openness, accessible to all people according to given traditional principles. Yet the issue of identity, is not a

problem to the oral person. Of course, there is a Yoruba identity, and the name neither came with European colonization nor was formed by the British colonial masters as was the Nigerian nation. A child may start to see himself as an Ọyọ, soon children of different dialect of the same Yoruba culture come to embraced each other, and to proclaimed their Yorubaness while remaining their local selves: the ẹgba, Ijẹbu, Ekiti, Ijẹṣa sub-identities. An Ijẹbu Yoruba compromises nothing by sharing the diverse spaces of the Yoruba world with remaining Yoruba sub-groups such as the Ọyọ or Ẹgba Yoruba. Neither does a Yoruba person feel he compromises his Yorubaness by sharing the open market with a Nupe, Fulani, Hausa, Ebira, or Beriberi in his own domain.

In other words, cultural interactions and influences are not often seen as threatening in oral societies, since in all instances, the majority (I prefer to avoid the word "dominant") oral culture survives, and in many instances nativizes cultural elements from contacts with minority groups. But in many instances, the nativization process is adopted both ways: the majority nativizes elements from the minority, and the minority from the majority. Often what is minority in a certain community becomes a majority in its own domain. A good example comes from Ilọrin: a Yoruba-cum-Hausa-Fulani settlement in the late 19th century. It was reported that Ilọrin's market was so big and that traders from neighboring communities constantly came to sell their goods (an American observer was reported to have described it as "one of the greatest centerpots of central Africa" (qtd. in Ọlaoye, 1984: 4; I wonder how "central Africa" Ilọrin is?). In this situation, speakers of languages such as Nupe, Baruba, Hausa, Yoruba, and Fulfude--who formed the neighboring communities, participated in the market. Being an oral culture market, its advertisements were in Yoruba, but also in many of these

sister languages, and there could be different stalls for different language groups. The reality of this situation is that words, concepts, and terminology from one language group is acquired into another language group. But then such concepts, and terminology are nativized or indigenized such that they become members of their new languages' vocabularies. They assume positions as cultural and linguistic elements of their new setting. A similar example is the heavy borrowing from modern English, by which many foreign words are counted as English language words. The English situation must also have been helped by an element of orality.

In any event, through oral performances, the process of indigenization or nativization of cultural elements occurs more rapidly. It is a process of "accommodation" of "difference" and/or "similarity," what I like to describe as "indigenizing difference," and/or "indigenizing similarity," In other words, both differences and similarities acquire positions as members of another oral culture. This is not anything near the "assimilation" through which French colonial rulers expected Africans to shed their culture and become French citizens in thought, word, and deed. Indigenizing and nativizing are processes where active orality makes possible a life of diversity within and outside ethnic existence. The advertisement songs in the market, the oral performances in the streets, community centers, farms, towns, and villages, etc. help ensure that cultural pluralism in active orality society is a positive event. No one is threatened or feels threatened, and no one loses his identity.

This chapter continues the discussion of Yoruba as a highly diverse language and cultural group. However, it argues that similarities, rather than differences, are the hallmarks of its inherent cultural plurality. The chapter positions itself in arguing for an understanding of multicultural

concepts in an active orality society such as the Yoruba which differs from the New World society's. Using Ilọrin Yoruba as an example, the next chapter will discuss how, in an intrinsically culturally plural society, the people can easily retain their identity, despite multilingualism and multicultural influences.

Chapter 3

Folktales: The School, the Society, and the Wherewithal of Ilọrin (Yoruba) Active Orality

How is Ilọrin diversity and Yoruba cultural plurality portrayed in Yoruba folktales? How are Ilọrin Yoruba students and people who are exposed to Western influences and pop cultures through Western schools and electronic media able to retain their Yorubaness and continue to show this identity in schools and work places? How important is folk performance in an active orality society such as Ilọrin, where Islam is deeply rooted in people's daily lives? This chapter intends to answer these questions, which are central to the Yoruba identity of an Ilọrin person, given the controversial position of the Ilọrin community as Muslim, and multicultural, where Hausa, Fulani, Baruba, Nupe, Gobir and also claim cultural membership, and where Western education has influence.

When, in the last chapter, I said that I was writing as an Ilọrin, a Yoruba Ilọrin, I meant to acknowledge the possibility that an Ijẹṣa or Ẹgba, or any other Yoruba from the many Yoruba sub-groups in Nigeria may have views different from mine on some of the issues I have discussed in the previous chapters, or on the Yoruba folktales that this and the next chapter intend to explore, because his experiences differ from mine. I intended to assert my right as an Ilọrin-Yoruba-speaking person of the Yoruba culture, and to claim the Ilọrin Yoruba identity, and not to negotiate it because, in my opinion, one only negotiates what is in contention, or what one "begs" to be conferred on one, such as is done in a trade negotiation: "if you give/call

me 'Ilọrin Yoruba', I'll give you so much," or, "Let us compromise between your own thinking of who I am, and my own true origin story."

No, identity is not negotiable, as some thinkers propose. For example, Akeel Bilgrami states that "The concept of identity can be [negotiable]" (1992: 822). Although Bilgrami has linked his theory to his personal experience in the hands of a Hindu landlord (and he has every right to do so), unfortunately he misinterprets (or is it "misconveyed" to us?) what has actually happened between him and the Hindu landlord. He says:

> I recall that some years ago in India, almost to my surprise, I heard the words "I am a Muslim" on my lips. It is not just to meet a theoretical demand that I had better specify the context. I was looking for a paying-guest accommodation in a neighborhood with a predominantly lower-middle-class Hindu population, hostile to Muslims. A landlord who was interviewing me asked me what my religion was. It seemed hardly to matter that I found Islamic theological doctrine wholly noncredible, that I had grown up in a home dominated by the views of an irreligious father, and that I had then for some years adopted the customary aggressive secular stance of those with communist leanings. It seemed the only self-respecting thing to say in that context. It was clear to me that I was, without strain or artificiality, a Muslim for about *five minutes*. (p. 822)

Bilgrami should have said that he had used a "fake identity" as a protest to the hostility of the Hindu population. Bilgrami that was one who "found Islamic theology doctrine wholly noncredible ..., [who] had grown up in a home dominated by the views of an irreligious father, and ... for some years adopted the customary aggressive secular stance of those with communist leanings" (p. 822). Given the Muslim population in India, it might be possible there was a Muslim population in that particular "Hindu" town. If the Hindu he was tricking had given him back in his own coin and said, "Oh Assalamu alaykum, Al-hamdulillah, I'm actually a Muslim myself, you're welcome

brother," and offered to shake his hand and embrace him, my guess is that Bilgrami, before the man went too far, would retort, "Look, I'm not a Muslim; I was only faking it."

I have spent sometime on the Bilgrami theory not as a digression from the folktales performances that we intend to discuss, but to establish from the onset that when the Ilọrin performers of folktales claim their Yoruba identity, theirs is not a claim for convenience as is the case in Bilgrami's. Identity, to them, is that which you cannot fake or hide forever. Scholars must always endeavor to distinguish between illusion and reality whenever they are theorizing on cultural issues. The Yoruba have an adage, *Kò sí bí ásé s'ébòlò tí kò ní rùngbẹ́*, meaning that "whatever we do to the *ébòlò* vegetable, it will [eventually] smell bad." The "borrowed" dressings on *ébòlò* will fade after some time, and the *ébòlò* will remain its true bad-smelling-self. *Afẹfẹ a fẹ, aa si ri ìdí ádìẹ́*, the air will blow off the feathers, and we shall see the hidden part of the cock/hen.

While contemporary Ilọrin is Yoruba, it is also Hausa/Fulani, and Nupe, and Baruba, and Gobir. And I possibly belong to all these ethnic roots, and could perhaps claim each of these cultures in different contexts. The point is that if I do so, I will not be faking, because as an Ilọrin, I will only be affirming what my lineage history tells me. Ilọrin Afọnja, Ilọrin Garin Alimi: Ilọrin is called "Ilọrin Afọnja", being the name of Afọnja, the generalissimo of Ọyọ Yoruba; it is also called "Garin Alimi", an Hausa phrase that means, Alimi's city, after the Fulani Muslim scholar. Ilọrin is also a town of Tapa, Baruba, Gobir, and Male, and all immigrants who settled there from far and near West African communities.

No one can say for certain when the name "Ilọrin," was first used for the spot from which the Ilọrin town got its name. A number of versions of

the Ilọrin origin story exists, and we shall discuss two of those that are treated more frequently by scholars. What seems to me to be the most popular of these versions, at least among contemporary Ilọrin people, is the oral tradition which claims that Yoruba hunters, first Ojo Iṣekuṣe and later others, sharpened their metal implements on some pieces of rock around a place now called Ile Bamidele in Oke-koto. The Yoruba phrase for iron-sharpener is *Ilọ́ írín*, (*ìlọ́*, being " tools-to-sharpen", or simply "sharpening", and *írín*, "iron") and thus the area continued to be called Ilọrin, even though at first no one made the place a home. However, it later became a settlement as Ojo and his fellow hunters, each time they came to sharpen their metal implements, stayed first a day or two, and then more days, in the area. The name Ilọrin was therefore a shortened form of *Ilọ́ írín*, "tools for iron sharpening." In other words, the Bamidele compound was believed to be the first settlement in what is now Ilọrin (see Harmon-Hodge, 1929). The less popular version claims that the name Ilọrin came from the Yoruba phrase, *Ilu érín*, meaning "elephant town," insisting that the area used to be the elephants' forest. One ready example often cited by this version is a village called *Okó-érín*, "elephant village", which is now a part of Ilọrin town (Hermon-Hodge, p. 63). Eventually more people from different parts of what is today Nigeria--Yoruba, Nupe, Hausa, Fulani, Gobir, Baruba--mainly traders but also some warriors, migrated to settle in Ilọrin, with Yoruba maintaining a clear majority. It was also confirmed that some traders from Mali settled in Ilọrin which, as I mentioned in a previous chapter, had a large traditional market. It is noteworthy that, before 1823, the area around the iron sharpening rocks was just a tiny settlement; all the other groups who settled in nearby areas had different names and every group, including the mainly hunter-families around Ile Bamidele, lived in different small clans.

Oral historical accounts indicate that Yoruba hunters were the first to settle in what is now a large Ilọrin town, but it was not too long before the other groups began to establish their own settlements in other parts of what is now Ilọrin. Yoruba religions, Islam, and other forms of traditional African worship were practiced in the various clans. For example, there were the Yoruba Muslim clans, the Hausa clan, and the Fulani, and Malian Muslims living in different clans. Also, traditional African worshipping cuts across the language groups.

Afọnja, the Ọyọ empire's main warrior, whose official title was *Arẹ́-ọ̀nà-kánkánfò*, i.e., generalissimo, was sent on a military expedition to a town called *Iwere* by the Alafin Aole (Ọlaoye, pp. 5-7). Though Afọnja finally captured the town, he could not claim a clear victory in the war. Having thus felt ashamed that many of his soldiers were killed, he decided to seek out his long-time friend, named Ayinla, who was then settling in Ilọrin (Ibid.). Afọnja eventually made Ilọrin his home, and as *Arẹ́-ọ̀nà-kánkánfò*, he commanded respect, and became even more famous and powerful in his Ilọrin base. He grew over-ambitious, plotting to overthrow the ruling Alafin, and, according to some oral traditions, he wanted to rule over all of the entire Ọyọ.

There are two versions regarding how Alimi came to Ilọrin. One version says that Alimi had settled in some Yoruba towns around Ọyọ before finally settling in Ilọrin (Ọlaoye, pp. 6-7), and that Afọnja invited Alimi to bring his soldiers to help him put the Alafin on their knees. After the successful accomplishment of this task, Alimi and his people settled in Ilọrin, winning more and more converts and forging stronger ties with the Muslim groups they met in Ilọrin. A story says that friction occurred between Afọnja and Alimi when the latter tried to convert Afọnja to Islam

(Ibid., p. 7). Afọnja was killed, and Alimi mobilized the different clans to form a single community, and he installed his first son as the first King, otherwise called Emir of Ilọrin, or, in Yoruba, *Ọbá Ìlọ́rín*, in 1823 (Ibid., pp. 10-11). Another version says that it was Afọnja who, having been very impressed by the success of the Alimi army in defeating the Alafin, invited Alimi to rule over Ilọrin, but that the latter declined on the excuse that his mission was purely religious and was not to ascend to a throne. He, however, sent for his first son who later became the *Ọbá Ìlọ́rín*. Another version, yet, says that Alimi came straight as an army of the Jihad movement to conquer Ilọrin for Islam, killed Afọnja, and took over the throne as the Emir of Ilọrin, establishing Islam as the official religion of the town ("Interview" Sa'adu). Whatever version we accept as closest to the truth, the fact remains that Ilọrin has developed as a multiethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-lingual community where active orality has kept alive the different cultural identities, especially Yoruba and Hausa, while also bringing about some common significations among them.

Contemporary Ilọrin is predominantly Muslim. Does that make the Ilọrinians less Yoruba, or Hausa, or Gobir, or Nupe, or indeed, African? Does Islam stop anyone from practicing his ethnic cultures or claiming his family, regional, or national identity? Does claiming an Islamic identity invalidate the Yoruba, Hausa, Chinese, or Arab identity? What is required of a person to be a Muslim is belief in the Oneness of God and the prophethood of Muhammad, and devotion to other Islamic articles of faith, and observance of the five pillars of Islam (see Ahmed, 1980). Whether a person is a Muslim or a Christian does not diminish his Yorubaness and it is erroneous to think that because Ilọrin is Muslim it is less Yoruba. In the previous chapters we discussed how Yoruba culture, as an inherently

pluralist culture, has a "large heart" and enough room for diversity of beliefs and social practices. Yoruba, as discussed in Chapter 1, is defined by *káàarọ́ óòjiire*, meaning that whatever people traditionally speak the language now called Yoruba is Yoruba.

At a conference[1] where I gave a paper entitled "Waka: Multiculturalism, Language and Thematic Focus of an Ilọrin Oral Performance," Niyi Ọ̀ṣundare asked me and the other panelists a pertinent question, which I can only attempt to paraphrase here: "Hasn't African culture lost its richness with Islamization and Christianization"? or "Can Yoruba oral forms retain their cultural richness when adopted for Islamic or Christian social purposes?" My answer to the first question is "no", especially as far as Yoruba culture is concerned; and "yes" to the second. As Ilọrin Yoruba culture clearly shows, Islam gives Yoruba culture, as an active orality culture, the opportunity to further nativize new elements that present some similar or even dissimilar outlooks to its culture. As my conference paper argues, the Ilọrin *waka* oral genre is an example of a contemporary Yoruba oral performance derived from Islamic social practices in Ilọrin. Several such performances, completely in Yoruba, enrich the Ilọrin Yoruba culture. We have looked at examples in Chapter 2 from *Orín Ẹ̀sìn. Fuji* is another example of a contemporary Yoruba oral genre (popular in most parts of the Yoruba communities of Nigeria), derived from an oral performance among Yoruba Muslims called *wéré*, i.e., the songs used as wake-up bells for early morning food during the Islamic month of obligatory fasting, the month of Ramadan. The many examples of Yoruba Islamic forms show how, because of the active orality status of Yoruba culture, it always uses its potential to indigenize new forms rather than lose its Yorubaness to new cultures. This contradicts V. S. Naipaul's thesis that Islam is an "Arabicizing" agent destroying native

traditions, robbing people of their native identities (see Naipaul, 1998). Apart from the Ilọrin evidences I have discussed above, the various indigenous coloration that Muslims around the world portray is different from locality to locality-- the Hausa from the Yoruba, the Arab from the Pakistani, the Chinese from the English--in my opinion it is rather the Muslims among all world believers that hold on more strongly to native traditions and identities. They render, as we do in Ilọrin, Islamic practices into indigenous forms, and, in our own case, utilizing active orality culture to live our Islam. One possible misinterpretation made in Naipaul's assertion that recitation of the Quran in Arabic during prayers has itself made everybody an Arab. But it will interest him to know, for example, that the Yoruba Muslim has his own recitation tongue which portrays him as Yoruba, not Arab. It may help Naipaul if, rather remaining in passive orality cultures of the New World's Islamic converts (especially since his experiences in Pakistan and India seem to have done little to change his mind), he made an excursion to Iwo, a Yoruba community in southwestern Nigeria with more than a century of large Muslim population, and participate in and try to understand their oral performances when they sing *kéwú sòró, kéwú sòró, kéwú sòró ké, kééwú sòró, àwón Ìwo l'óní kùráànì, kéwú sòró,* (similar performances in Ẹpẹ among the Ẹgba Yoruba, etc.), meaning "Islamic reading is tough, it is tough, the Iwo (people) are the owners of the Quran, reading is tough".

Discussing the inherent cultural plurality in folktales among the Ilọrin Yoruba, I will show how Western culture and Islam form parts of what is a multicultural reality in Ilọrin. The Western school and the Islamic cultural institutions in Ilọrin, especially that which can be proven to have strongly influenced the daily lives of the Ilọrinians, will help to demonstrate how the

active orality of Ilọrin has been able to survive in contemporary Nigeria. Some questions which one may ask are: does the Western School, as the epitome of Western written culture in Africa, diminish the active orality status of communities such as Ilọrin? How does being Muslim or Christian, affect the Yoruba performer of traditional folktale?

I am the first researcher to collect Yoruba oral performance materials from Ilọrin. Ropo Sekoni (1990: 152-55), in his "Narrative Pattern and Audience Experience", uses one of the folktales collected in Ilọrin, a performance by one Musa Ayinde and three members of the audience in December 1979. Sekoni is, however, not the original collector of this tale and the method of its collection is different from mine for many reasons. It was collected around 8:00 at night, most likely the same time as children gather to listen to tales under the moonlight. As a leading scholar of African oral literature, Sekoni must have been satisfied with the level of Yoruba cultural practices in this tale to have selected it as the first of his two examples of Yoruba tales. According to all available evidence, the performer's name, Musa, indicates that he is a Muslim, and, although we are not told about the names of the members of the audience, it is likely that they are also Muslims. As a Yoruba rhetorist would say, the same *Ifá* that divined for Sekoni's collector divines for me. My race-horse is only imitating the horse in front of him, and thus I run at the pace dictated by the front horse, following steps that the front horse's examples show are safe on the field, and if I take one or two steps faster, then it is a case, I hope, of one's Masquerade dancing better!

It must be stated that all the performers in the folktale sessions I shall discuss in this work were aware that they were being recorded on video. I am fully conversant with the disadvantages arising from a "stage managed" performance, where, as Isidore Okpewho puts it, "most scholars simply

approach a traditional story-teller with a request, and he or she goes right away to tell a tale" (1992: 222). In other words, the tales so told in that circumstance become isolated performances, devoid of the continuity they often enjoy with the folktale session's preliminary activities:

> [I]n the traditional setting storytelling is only one of the entertainments provided on an evening of relaxation (for instance), and **may** come only after other forms of activity, e.g., hide and seek games by children, reminiscences of the day's events by the adults, and perhaps a few riddles and sayings. (Okpewho, 1992: 222)

As quoted by Okpewho, Oyekan Owomoyela also presents a description of the preliminary activity in a folktale session:

> After the evening meal, the members of the family gather on a porch and if there is moonlight, the younger members gather in the courtyard to play games like hide and seek. On the porch, the entertainment begins with riddles. What dines with an *Oba* (paramount chief of a community) and leaves him to clear the dishes? A fly. What passes before the *oba*'s palace without making obeisance? Rain flood. On its way to Oyo its face is toward Oyo, on its way from Oyo its face is still towards Oyo. What is it? A double-faced drum. After a few riddles, the tales begin. (Ibid.; see also Owomoyela 214-5)

In a work I co-authored with Bayọ Ogunjimi, we also emphasized the pre-tale activity, but called it "Introduction":

> Introduction is a very important component of oral narratives. It is the stage that ushers in the story or tale proper. The narrator or prose-performer ensures that the introduction is adequately exploited for a successful narrative session. In other words, it is believed that if the introduction is bad, the story or tale proper may suffer passive reception. So, introduction techniques in prose narratives are aimed at achieving the following:

(i) Calling the audience's attention
(ii) arousing the interest of the audience
(iii) making a formal declaration of the beginning of a story session
(iv) making some language exercise or display
(Ogunjimi and Na'Allah, 1991: 80)

It is important to explain that what Okpewho (1992) and Owomoyela (1977) have identified as pre-tale activity (i.e., the hide and seek games, riddles, etc.) are only a "possible" situation, as Okpewho rightly stated in the above quotation, and a folktale session often goes without the games and only what Ogunjimi and Na'Allah describe as "Introduction." There are times that riddles and jokes come as a break in the folktale narration session. In any case, before recording the folktale performances for this work, my collectors discussed this matter with the performers and asked them to do a true-life situation performance for them. The "question" may be raised as to why, unlike Ropo Sekoni's material, my own recordings are done during the daytime, whereas Yoruba folktales are primarily performed under the moonlight. Performing folktales during daylight does not make them less authentic or prevent them from being folktales. The "Ozidi tales," from which J. P. Clark's *The Ozidi Saga*, described by Isidore Okpewho as "meticulously documented" (1990a: 160), was composed, and originally recorded outside its traditional performance setting--in fact, it was recorded in a far away Nigerian city populated by a different ethnic group:

This story of a posthumously born hero, who avenges the assassination of his father by fellow-warriors and never stops his slaughter until he eliminates all the forces in his community and reigns in uncontested supremacy, is traditionally told during a festival among the Tarakiri Orua, a sub-group of the Ijo of the Niger Delta (in the Bendel State of Nigeria). Traditionally the performance spans a period of seven nights. In this particular instance, the story was performed in Ibadan, in the Yoruba

> west of Nigeria, several hundred kilometers away from its origin. In spite of this remove, however, the atmosphere of the recording managed (and here J.P. Clark deserves full credit for his imagination) to retain something of the traditional setting. Though there were a number of European and other non-Ijo colleagues who accompanied Clark to the event, the audience was essentially made up of Ijo residents in Ibadan; the performance itself was hosted by Madam Yakubu, an Ijo matron who has led Ijo groups in the performance of traditional songs for radio Nigeria; the recording was done by J.P. Clark, himself an Ijo; and the entire business was accomplished in a total of seven nights as dictated by tradition.
>
> (Okpewho, 1990a: 163)

Yet all the oral researcher did was make sure that the performers and recorders were Ijo, and of course he strictly followed other traditional Ijo performance norms (Okpewho, 1990a: 163). I consider, as quite important for the authenticity of the oral material, the nature of the composition of the performers and whether they are performing according to their own natural and cultural characteristics or according to rules laid down by certain academic researchers.

In Yoruba, and indeed in sub-Saharan African folktales sessions, there are no rehearsals, no prior characterization, pre-identification, or assignments, and even those who are selected by the lead-performer to narrate do not usually know that they will be called upon, although such a knowledge does not reduce a folk narration's authenticity or spontaneity. It is possible for a person who has heard a particular tale from another group (school or home) to aim to tell it to others in a different family or class session, or even for the student to note the title on a piece of paper (though this rarely happens). In collecting these folktales, it was made very clear to the performers that they should perform as they would in a normal folktale session. No rehearsals nor selection of preferred tales were made. It was also ensured that those doing the recordings were, in all cases, indigenous

Yoruba speakers: friends or family members of the performers. In my opinion, these steps reduced to the minimum the kind of trepidation that may occur when an outsider asks for an oral performance, "stage-managed" or not.

Transcription of Oral Narratives

There is much debate about the importance of faithful transcriptions of oral narratives to the production of a written script that is very similar to the actual oral performance. Isidore Okpewho says that the "business of transcribing with absolute faith the relevant contingencies of an oral performance is a very expensive one" (Okpewho, 1990a: 160). He rightly stated that few publishers would be willing to invest their money for printing such a work. In my view, it all comes down to age old folklore/oral literature politics in academia. The main reason that publishers will not publish this kind of work is that the academic world persists in its primitivist behavior, with the sense that up until the so-called post-colonial and post-modern times, the colonial theorists' treatment of oral performance as "savage" and "uncivilized" still dictates how the academic world feels about folktales or any oral narrative, especially in Europe and North America. In undergraduate or graduate curricula in American and European universities--especially in language and literature programs, even the comparative literature ones--courses on oral literature or folklore are usually limited to lessons on fairy tales, and the only stories are those of ghosts and mystery figures. Oral poetry, oral drama, and other highly rich folk

performances receive little scholarly attention. Even now, at the end of the twentieth century, Western academia continues to wrap folklore in the negativity of the "unsophisticated material" blanket. As far as I am concerned, this is the main reason that publishers will not "risk" publishing what critics may end up condemning as "jungle whistling" and "savage murmuring," and thus, though so-called "academic thoroughness" continues to determine attitudes in other areas of social and scientific research, folklore never seems to receive the same consideration. Therefore, researchers can compromise such important performance parts as audience participation and performers' paralinguistic accompaniments, and thus leave oral narratives analysis deformed in Western journals and books. It is pitiable that J.P. Clark's 1977's *The Ozidi Saga* is the 1990 "wake-up call" for a "meticulously documenting [of] the statements interpolated by various 'Spectators' into the narration of the tale" or examining "the role of the audience" in oral narratives (Okpewho, 1990a: 160) or abandoning the primitivist's position!

In any case, what I am emphasizing in this work, as do Finnegan (1970, 1977, and 1992), Clark (1977), Okpewho (1990a; 1990b; and 1992: 163-225), Sekoni (1990), and especially Tedlock (1971, 1975: 106-25, 1977, and 1978), is that oral narratives are performance- or action-oriented, and that the written text, if it wants to represent the oral forms, must document all the performance features of the narratives. It is like a drama text, also an action-packed form, which includes stage directions and playwrights' comments giving descriptions and explaining the actions of the actors. All the actors are allowed to have their active roles. Tedlock is correct when he describes oral narratives as dramatic poetry (see Okpewho, 1990b: 116; also Tedlock, 1975:

123), although one must avoid the confusion of assuming all folktales to be poetic.

Academia must begin to treat the oral form transcript as they treat the dramatic text, because, like drama, an utterance is incomplete without the action accompanying it. Journals must begin to reject any transcription of the oral form that does not describe the performer and explain the actions of both the narrator and the audience. In other words, an oral narrative (and this applies to all categories of oral performances) is not a modern fiction, even though the novel has descriptions of characters' actions and thoughts. However, more than the novel, an oral performance is always a life performance and must retain its living elements even in print. This is what Okpewho describes as representing the oral literary materials "with due propriety" (1990b: 111). Okpewho says further:

> Perhaps it should be stressed that, as editors of oral texts, we have undertaken a by no means easy responsibility of reconciling two media of cultural expression, and that we owe at least to the culture from which we have taken something, the duty not to violate our charge, but to accord it as much of its integrity as host culture will allow. (p. 111)

Indeed, the host culture has much integrity and the so-called editors of academic researchers who are eager to appreciate the rich oral traditions must allow the oral form to maintain its dignity. Okpewho also describes this as "loyalty to the original material both in linguistic and contextual terms" (ibid., p. 112). The Yoruba have a saying, *Ọbẹ̀ t'ódùn ówó ló pá,* meaning that "a delicious *ẹ̀gúnsí* soup has money to "thank" for its scrumptious flavor." The idea here is that if a person wants to enjoy a good *ẹ̀gúnsí* soup, he has to labor (or do whatever is required to acquire it) and ensure that the soup ingredients are complete. In another analogy, water will

never be called soup if all it contains is water. Okpewho's description of the "translator of an oral performance" as a "creative middleman" is appropriate. However, since he also directly enjoys the materials not just as a translator but also as a consumer of them, he is both a middleman and a "consumer" of the oral performance.

One thing he is not is an editor of oral performance! We must be very careful in the way we transfer the discourse of written scholarship to the phenomena of oral literary research. It is appropriate to make this correction because one cannot edit oral performance materials. Even people, typesets, and publishes the oral manuscript, they are still not an editor. They are merely a collector, or translator (typesetter, publisher, or perhaps even transmitter) (see Okpewho, 1990b: 117, 122)! In some cases such persons do not know much about the primary texts, and because they are called editors their books are treated as if they are collections of written (not transcribed or translated) essays. They have usually torn the oral text to pieces, imposing words, terminology, and interpretations on materials they themselves have never performed. Editors of Journals and scholarly books cannot also assume the positions of editors of oral materials (even if they can edit the English structures in the essays), and I doubt whether that is what any editor would want to do. However creative a translator may be, he still remains a "translator" of the oral performance, not an editor, because he cannot suggest replacements for the words, sentences, or manners the oral performers have used; he has to limit his job to conveying the performer's intentions in the best synonyms possible in the target language. Academic scholars of oral field research who are not themselves oral performers of the particular oral genre cannot edit either. They must transcribe the oral materials exactly as they have collected them. For example, because I am a usual performer of the

folktales that I analyze in this work, and because I have made a case, in the Introdution, for a right "to assert [my] knowledge and experiences in enriching [my] discussion of African orality" (see Finnegan, 1992: p. 3) in other words, to enter the "mood or muse of the genre" (Ibid.: 193) as a "translator-performer" I do have the license to "edit," but again with the greatest caution possible. Editorial suggestions must be made only because the performance itself allows for improvisation, and yet, my own rendition of it will be another performance, my own performance, and not the original collection.

Perhaps, apart from the non-literate oral bard himself, only oral performers who sometimes also assume the position of writers of their own oral cultures can be called authors of their oral narration and of their materials, if indeed those materials are performed by them out of their own cultural lives. In African orality, or at least in Yoruba oral form, even performances that are largely communal also involve the use of the individual performer's talents, originality, and creativity. That is why, as I have already said in this work, no two performances of a story are ever the same because the performer engages fresh initiatives each time, renewing the use of his skills and making the story suit the new context and performance situation.

How should I transcribe the folktales in this work? In what order should the words be arranged, especially for the narrator-performer and the audience-performer so that the relationship between these two can be understood by the reader? According to Isidore Okpewho, questions such as mine have presented themselves to many previous researchers of oral performance, and many have used different methods to transcribe their oral

narrative collections. The following are how Okpewho explains some of the many methods:

> 1. Tedlock has often transcribed his oral narrative texts into verse lines which respect the appropriate breaks that he has identified in his recordings, even when--and this is the essential point--the narration was not accompanied by instrumental music. (1990b: 115)
> 2. J. P. Clark's edition of *The Ozidi Saga* ... meticulously document... the statements interpolated by various "Spectators" into the narration of the tale. (Okpewho, 1990a: 160)
> 3. [B]oth Bird (*Kambili*) and Innes (*Sunjata*), adopt as the basis of their transcriptions the fundamental rhythmic structure; every line of text thus represents all that is said within the scope of the narration and the absence of any strict correspondence between rhythm and content. (Okpewho, 1990b: 119)
> 4. Although Mr Simayi told his stories in everyday diction, and although there was general irregularity between the statements which he pronounced in successive breath sequences, I was sufficiently impressed by the emotive charge of each performance to treat the narration itself as a form of unconstrained *song*. ... [and] therefore transcribed the narrative text in "verse" lines. (ibid., p. 120)

It is exciting that several formulas have been identified for transcribing the oral narrative. All the ones quoted above are, in my opinion, very useful, and each of them can be improved upon in order to continue the effort of "transcribing with absolute faith the relevant contingencies of an oral performance" (Okpewho, 1990a: 160). Most attempts have been to transcribe the oral narratives into verse lines; Bird and Innes focus also on the "rhythmic structure" and marking the "correspondence between rhythm and content" (see ibid., 1990b: 119). Okpewho does not exaggerate the importance of J. P. Clark's contributions to the African oral narrative scholarship by giving the Spectator his due in his (Clark's) transcription of Ijo oral narrative. This is especially important in the Yoruba folktale where

the audience is almost as active as the narrator. The importance of the audience participation in the Yoruba folktale is not for "integrating the audience in the performance of a ... tale" (ibid., 1990a: 160). Both the audience and the narrator are united in the performance of the Yoruba folktale, and the tale's performance will not be complete without the involvement of the audience. In other words, it is not a question of "integrating" (a word which suggests an external effort to include it, rather than to recognize it as a rightful member that already exists therein) the audience into the oral narration, but rather of its belonging to the oral narrative performance and thus taking its rightful place in the transcription. In some recent studies of Native American oral traditions, many, and in some cases similar, methods enumerated by Okpewho were also used to transcribe, translate, and in many instances, represent the "voices" of the oral narrator. Two ready examples are Julie Cruikshank, et. al's *Life Lived Like A Story* (1990) and Howard Norman's *The Wishing Bone Cycle* (1976) which Neufeldt (1997) describes as "represent[ing] significant and conscious efforts to transcribe and accurately represent oral traditional materials, but not necessarily the social and cultural practices of transmission that contain such materials" (p. 39). In the first book, Cruikshank collaborated with three Indigenous Americans, Angela Sidney, Kitty Smith and Annie Ned, who are allowed to narrate their stories, while Cruikshank gives an account of all these narratives, and thus "writes a story about ... stories" (Neufeldt, p. 42). We are not told whether the three Natives' narrations were recorded on video or audio tapes, though from all accounts, these individuals could write and seemed to have written their own stories as well. Norman's efforts were elaborate. He adopted typographical codes, used prefaces, described details, marked pitch levels, repetitions, periods of silences, and pauses (Norman,

1976; see also Neufeldt, pp. 44-56 for a good criticism of Cruikshank's and Norman's attempts). Some of Norman's methods are very similar to Tedlock's suggestions.

It is difficult to doubt the fact that, as Okpewho declares, "music plays an inestimable role in the oral narrative performance" (1990b. 121) and thus there are songs, drumming, and dance in most African folktale sessions, including Yoruba ones. However, it may not be correct to transcribe Yoruba folktales in verse despite the musical accompaniment of most tales. This is not to say that Dennis Tedlock's efforts in "opposing the use of prose in recording oral narratives" (see Okpewho, 1992: 163) is not valid regarding many other African oral narratives. However, Yoruba tales are mostly not chants or poetry, and they may not fall within what Tedlock calls *dramatic poetry* (qtd. in Okpewho, 1990b: 116). I will call them, rather, *dramatic narratives*. The song elements of Yoruba folktales come at particular intervals, and do not constitute major parts of the tales. In fact, some folktales in Yoruba do not have musical accompaniment. In addition, the songs in the tales do not often give any major narration or continue the story to the end; most of the time, they serve as an element reinforcing a particular issue in the tale. It is clearly with this perspective that Ropo Sekoni (pp. 152-58), unlike Okpewho (1990b: 127-35), does not transcribe his collected tales in verse: only the intermittent song accompaniments appear in verses. Sekoni in his two tales in that work, also produces a tale without song or music accompaniment. Yet, an examination of the songs in one of the tales, "The Story of Two Wives", [2] shows that the songs reinforce only a very limited aspect of the tale:

Performer: Where is my senior mate's igbako?

Audience: Slowly it floats down the stream, slowly.
Performer: Where is my senior mate's igbako?
Audience: Slowly it floats down the stream, slowly. (p. 153)

The tale itself is about two co-wives who lived in discord, and how, through jealousy, hatred, greediness, the senior wife met her death. The story involves *igbakọ* which the senior wife had lent the junior wife and which she had lost. It is a long tale, relating the details of how the junior wife borrowed the igbakọ, lost it, tried to replace it, made efforts to find the lost igbakọ because the senior wife rejected the replacement, and how she met a number of old women, each of whom gave her a clue about how to find the lost *igbakọ* in payment for her service, and how finally she retrieved the lost *igbakọ* and a lot of riches and offered the senior wife her *igbakọ* and some of her wealth. Of course, the senior wife accepted only the *igbakọ* and declined the wealth. Instead she herself, out of jealousy, followed some of the steps taken by the junior wife, hoping to obtain her own wealth, but ended up losing her life. Sekoni translates the tale into more than 84 lines, in 14 paragraphs. However, the accompanying song is only four lines, repeated 6 times throughout the tale. The songs tell us that the junior wife is looking for an igbakọ which has been carried down a stream. This is a very small part of the story, which we would know anyway from the major narrative body. In a nutshell, the Yoruba tale is not *dramatic poetry*. The tale has dramatic accompaniment, but I prefer to call it, as I have already, a *total theater* with songs, mime, dance, music, dialogue, and sometimes costume. To call the tales *dramatic poetry* as Tedlock has called some oral narratives is too limiting for many Yoruba folktales.

As much as possible, a transcription of a Yoruba folktale must provide full details which give the reader/secondary performer clues about the

activities involved. The idea is not to make the reader perform the tale according to the transcript provided, but to show what a particular performance looks like and to give the reader as much information as possible in analyzing the tale. Every transcription must contain some information describing what actually happened during the performance. For example, a transcription should provide a description of the performer and his appearance, including details about his dress, his physical features, his voice, and his general actions throughout the performance.

The narrator is the central figure during performance, and many researchers of African oral narratives have rightly concluded that the narrator has the sole role of either making or marring the entire narrative session. This is not to say that a bad audience, or a poor member thereof is not a danger to the narrative performance; however, in many circumstances it is the narrator who dictates the pace and explores his narrative talent, voice modulation, ability to create suspense, choice of words, power of description, etc. to make the session successful. Regarding the narrator of Yoruba folktales, Sekoni writes:

> The narrator's ability to use his voice and body to convey the emotions of characters, to delineate his characters and comment on specific actions of such characters, is basic for the achievement of initial aesthetic harmony with the audience. (p. 141)

The problem is in how one represent the narrator's voice tone and modulation in the transcription. Sometimes he changes his voice so frequently that after talking now as Tortoise, he talks later as Goat, and then as Hen, as Cat, and as a human, sometimes in high and other times in low tones! Dennis Tedlock's proposals and Okpewho's modifications are helpful. Says Okpewho (1990b):

> Tedlock and his colleagues have proposed some useful typographical devices whereby the various tonal levels used in story-telling can be distinguished. For words said in a high tone they propose boldface type; for word said in a low tone they propose italic type; and for ordinary speech levels they propose the normal roman. (p. 123)

Okpewho's modification focuses on the use of boldface for words said in high tone. He says that he prefers capital letters instead, arguing that "both usages" convey "the sense of alert" (p. 123).

I am not convinced, however, that any or all of the above proposals, good as they are, can sufficiently convey the creative way in which the narrator uses his voice in oral narrative performance. It is unfortunate that scholars have limited their efforts in giving a clearer picture of an oral performance because of fear that publishers may not accept their manuscript. Rather than giving up important details about the performance, scholars should devise some short codes or even use short commentaries, which may be shorter than the type we have in a drama script, to complement some of the devices already identified above. Such summarized comments, similar to what J. P. Clark used in *The Ozidi Saga*, will be additionally useful in showing the reaction of the audience members to the narrator's actions and to the story line. They will also give us information about how the narrator uses body language or mime and whether he dances lightly or heavily.

Until we have codes that represent each of these actions and can effectively replace them, the researcher's comments or parenthetical statements cannot be jettisoned, and I intend to adopt them in my own transcription. The scanty comments in Okpewho's transcription of Simayi's

narration are not enough to give a full picture of the folktale sessions. Most of them are on laughter, side comments about what we are not told, interruptions and exclamations. One or two times the comments, all in parentheses, include something like "Bard whispers warning to First Percussionist" (Okpewho, 1990b: 132), but we are not told how the whispering sounds, how dramatic it is, or later, the reaction of the First Percussionist to the whisperings. In another place, earlier in the transcription, there is a comment, "chuckles" (p. 130) and then the longest of all, "Someone knocks at the door. Bard says, 'Yes?' Young boy enters and sits. Bard motions him and says, 'Be careful'" (p. 131). Useful as these comments are, they are so limited in Okpewho's transcription that instead of creating a tradition of flowing commentaries, they bring about a haphazard situation where one comment does not lead to another but instead dies before the end of the episodic thread. In addition, Okpewho does not include such commentaries in his list of transcription methods, and thereby underrates their importance. Much has been written on the transcription of African oral narratives and most of my secondary sources in this chapter are helpful reading for anyone interested in learning more about some of the issues I have or have not touched upon.

However, before I start my own transcription of tales collected from Ilọrin, I need to re-emphasize my preoccupation in this work. I have stated before that my intention in transcribing the collected Yoruba tales is not only to discuss their narrative patterns but, perhaps more importantly, to examine how elements of Western education and Islam in Ilọrin have influenced Ilọrin performers, and how, as an active orality form, the Yoruba folktale retains its Yoruba cultural elements. I shall explore the use of language, the narrator's actions during narration, the audience's response

patterns, and the performers' dress. Like Okpewho, I will use capital letters to indicate rising voices, and italics to show lower ones. I will adopt the parenthetical statements and researcher's comments to indicate actions and reactions during the performance. Like in Ropo Sekoni's transcription, the songs will be in verse, and the narrative body in prose form. However, in a departure from Sekoni's method, I will show the actions of those I call lead-performer, narrator-performer, and audience-performers by having those designations written in front of all of their utterances as is normally the case in poetry or drama. I must emphasize that this does not make the Yoruba folktales Tedlock's dramatic poetry, but rather indicates clearly what the narrator does while making a particular utterance. Also, I shall indicate, where necessary, the proper names of performers invited from the audience by the lead-performer to take their turn in the performance.

Who is a lead-performer, a narrator-performer, and who are the audience-performers? I must say first that all members of the folktale session are performers, and active performers, as no one is passive in his role. In a communal performance such as I have recorded, there is always a leader who points at the members of the audience to beckon them to take their turns in the performance. This is also a regular occurrence during the moonlight sessions when young children gather around their grandparents or parents, or when they sit sometime to perform among themselves. There is always a person who, before or after he plays his own role as a narrator, also leads the entire session, calling people one by one to perform their own tale. Whoever has taken the stage to narrate a folktale is thus the narrator-performer, and at the time the members of the audience individually are an audience-performers or, collectively, an audience-performer. It must be said, however, that only the narrator-performer and the audience-performers are

constant in every session, in a situation where only one person narrates a story or stories and others form the audience. Sekoni's two folktales (pp. 152-59) are good examples of this type.

The opening formula, "Ààlọ́ óó! Ààlọ̀," is similar throughout Yoruba speaking communities. Indeed there are local variations according to dialects, or to how faithful the performer remains to the formula. Sometimes the variation is in line with the purpose of the performance: is it purely for entertainment, or to highlight some important point in a song composed by a Yoruba singer or in a discussion where a speaker decides to draw on the wisdom of folk performance? The normal method is, nevertheless, to start with the opening formula because it is the traditional introduction to the folktale session; however, no law insists on this beginning formula for a performer. For example, the two tales in Sekoni's work were originally collected from different Yoruba communities and Story I starts with the formula, but Story II does not.

In my discussions of African oral performance I have never addressed the issue of standard dialect because, in my opinion, the language of literary work does not require any standardization. This was one of the pitfalls of the Brother Grimm's methods in their works on German folklore. They arrogated to themselves the right to heavily "edit" the tales they collected. Even in Western folklore research their (seminal) example is deplored. They were not performers themselves and were too free in their editing (see e.g., Ellis, 1994). This phenomenon repeated itself in many parts of Europe and North America, where folklore researchers assumed the authority not only to standardize the language dialect of the performers, but also to filter "offensive, uncivilized words" from the collected texts.

I strongly believe that Isidore Okpewho (1990b: 118) shows greater wisdom in deciding to stick to the Ubulu-Uno dialect of Igbo in his transcription of Simayi performance. In all respects, the dialect of the performer is a part of the identity of his performance. The Ilọrin and the Ubulu-Uno stories will cease to be authentic as soon as researchers impose the so-called standard form on them, because this so-called central form is often the dialect of another community. The linguist, in his discussion of syntax, may talk about standardization, but this will not benefit an oral performer or literary scholar who is interested in authenticity and in the local variations of the literary form. Okpewho (1990b) actually confronted some serious problems regarding the use of standard Igbo, and finally decided to adhere to the local variation. He explains below why he rejected standard Igbo in transcribing the Ubulu-Uno story:

> Though there is now a well-accepted orthography for the Igbo language, its practical usefulness is minimal as far as the transcription of the tales I have collected from Mr Simayi are concerned. I say so not only because the Ubulu-Uno dialect is far removed from the central Igbo employed in working out the Onwu orthography, but because the tales were told in basically colloquial forms and I believe that the colloquiality of the narration should be preserved against the claims of grammatical forms recognized in standard orthographies which linguists and educators are, understandably, anxious to establish on a firm footing. In colloquial speech there are frequent elisions, contractions and other forms of abbreviation; so it would be a misrepresentation of the raw vitality of Mr Simayi's performance to spell out his lines into all their constituent syllables just so as to make them intelligible in terms agreeable with the recommendations of the Onwu orthography. (p. 118)

It is not only because of the need for local coloration that a transcription must adhere to the original dialect of the folktale collection. All translations

arising from the oral materials must also be made strictly from the perspective of the local form of the language.

In *African Oral Literature* (1992), Isidore Okpewho discusses the categories of the oral narrative and describes the name *folktale* as "a generally accepted way of describing tales of the oral tradition" (p. 181). He prefers *oral narrative* not only because it is a more contemporary term, but also because it is "relatively devoid of prejudice and adequately representative of the nature of the art" (p. 181). Okpewho talks about the general problems of many subclassifications, identifying, as examples, a number of subcategories such as *animal tales*, *human tales*, and *fairy tales*. The problem with these subclasses, he writes, is that they all behave alike, and that such classifications do not take into consideration the fact that in many of the tales, "fairies, humans, and animals interact with one another" (181). He talks about other subclassifications such as *myth*, trickster tales, *Dilemma tales*, historical tales, Origin tales, moonlight tales, divination tales, hunter's tales, legends, explanatory tales, and fables (see 181-221). Again, the major problem Okpewho identifies with the various classifications is "how sometimes the boundary between one kind of tale and another becomes somewhat blurry" (203).

The detailed descriptions of categories and subcategories which Okpewho gives in his book are very interesting. However, the particular preoccupation of this work is Yoruba folktales, and the Yoruba person himself has made the classification of folktales much easier by establishing his own definition with only two categories: *àlọ àpagbè* and *àlọ àpamọ̀*. These two names are self explanatory, the first, *àlọ àpagbè*, are tales in which the audience, at intervals, sings the narrator's songs; and the second, *àlọ àpamọ̀*, are riddles in which the members of the audience are given tasks so

as to enable them to exercise their minds and show a level of quick wit. The first category often also includes folktales without any songs in them, as several Yoruba folktales do not have song accompaniment. The Yoruba do not burden their folktales with too many definitions. While I agree with Okpewho that the term *oral narratives* is contemporary and thus easily acceptable, I do not think it appropriate for scholars of African oral literature to shy away from a term simply because of primitivist or Eurocentric prejudices. For example, in many instances, *oral narratives* is a term that would be confusing to the Yoruba.

The Yoruba have definite names for their tales and make a crucial distinction between *àlọ́*, folktales, and *ìtàn*, stories. For example, many of Okpewho's sample tales in the above-mentioned book fall under *ìtàn* as myths and legends. The Yoruba do not believe that their myths and legends are imaginary or just create works, whereas the folktales are imaginary tales, demonstrating artistic talents, and can be called tales for moral lessons, fun, and entertainment. The *ìtàn* are revered and believed stories, even if they sound imaginary to many. It is interesting that the contemporary scholar of African oral culture will easily give up a term because of Western prejudices. I have always believed that the challenge is in insisting on who we are as Africans and in not defining ourselves as who others want us to be. I have heard the term *folk* which the West had derogated as, according to Okpewho, "'uneducated' ... irrational, and unimaginative dwellers of small communities" (1992: 163), used repeatedly by American politicians in 1996 presidential campaigns and thereafter to designate their people and show their closeness to them. In other words, yesterday's derogatory terminology can be today's words of praise; firmness and patience may be all that is required. I like *oral narratives* in discussion of the general tales, but will stick

to *folktales*, or the Yoruba names *àlọ́*, and *ìtàn*, whenever I talk about specific Yoruba examples, and will adhere to them in my further discussions.

I have insisted in this chapter that in an active orality society such as Ilọrin, multiculturalism and multilingualism do not necessarily cause people to forgo their identity. It argues that although people may be participants in several cultural forms and open to many influences, as is the case in Ilọrin, the active orality factor of a community keeps the indigenous tradition alive. In discussing the oral narrative poetics, I have insisted that, rather than changing the oral form to meet writing requirements and thereby compromising the oral identity, it is writing that should be explored in a way that it can efficiently represent orality. This is precisely what I have attempted in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Folktales

Folktales Session (A): The Western School & Ilọrin Folktales

The following folktale session was recorded in December, 1997, at the Government High School, Adewọle, Ilọrin, Nigeria. All the participants were students at the school, spread across all classes of Junior and Senior high school, the equivalence of grades 7 to 12 in the Canadian/American system. Close to 50 students, most of them female, participated in this folktale session. They all belong to a society called, *Ẹgbẹ Alalọ*, The Folktales Club, and the teacher-advisor of the club, Mr. Dada, appeared briefly at the beginning of the session. It was recorded on video for me by Abdul-Razaq Abdullahi, also a teacher at the school. Over ninety-nine percent of the students were from Ilọrin, and those whose parents were not indigenous to Ilọrin had lived in the community all their lives. Most of the members of the *Ẹgbẹ Álálọ* studied Yoruba as one of their school subjects but the membership of the club was opened to all students who were native Yoruba in the school regardless of whether or not they studied Yoruba as a school subject. Some of the members, who served here as Audience-Performers (A-P) or individually when they narrated their own folktales as Narrator-Performer (N-P), were in their school's white and blue uniform, others wore traditional *bùba* dresses and head-ties on top of the uniforms. The Lead-Performer (L-P) and his praise poet wore *agbada*, big gowns, and the L-P had a cap to match. The A-P were sitting on benches in a semi-circle

arrangement. The L-P and his praise poet sat directly in the center of the semi-circle. The performance took place inside the school hall.

Preliminary to Session A:

L-P (wearing a big blue àlàári gown, called *agbada*, with a cap to match, and taking his seat): I understand you have been expecting me since morning.

A-P: Yes, we have.

L-P (throwing his agbada's tip-hand over his shoulder): Ah, please don't be cross with me. It wasn't my wish not to be here with you since morning. But it is the Yoruba that say if there're no reason, (waiting for the audience to join in completing the adage) ...

A-P & L-P: a woman will not answer to the name, Kumolu[1]

L-P (throwing his agbada): That was why I was late, so please don't be crossed with me. (taking a seat) My *Rara*[2] poet! Praise me and let my head swollen up so that I can narrate some tale to these children today so that they can enjoy my tales as the white person enjoys cigarettes.

Rara Poet: Alabi Ikọ the offspring of Olokun ọlà
The offspring of Ẹlẹni ẹwẹlẹ

(Lead Performer adjusts his sitting, his back resting heavily on the back of his chair, his eyes facing up)

You're the offspring of straight-right, shortest-way
It's your eyelids that I fear!
The offspring of the sounding gong
Whose kitchen-back is full of resources

He's outside, would not greet those

We've been expecting you since morning!

Please come and give us your today's riddles

Whoever says you should not give us your performance today

It is a deafening cry that the thunder cries into the ground

It is what divines for Ọrunmila

When he was descending from the heaven to the earth

He said, Ọrunmila, there are enemies in front of you

He (Ọrunmila) said leave them, it is from the front that python takes its poison to kill a person

He said, Ọrunmila, there're enemies at your back

He (Ọrunmila) said leave them it is from the back that scorpion takes its poison to kill a person

He said Ọrunmila there are enemies in by your left and your right

He (Ọrunmila) said leave them, from the left and the right are the fighting hands of Sango

Whoever says you should not perform today,

It is a deafening cry that the thunder cries into the ground

We've been dying to have you (here)

Welcome, we hope you've arrived well

A-P: We've been expecting you

Welcome, (we hope) you've arrived well

We've been expecting you

Welcome, (we hope) you've arrived well

L-P: Good morning! Who're we here today?

A-P: We're members of the Folktales Club

L-P: We're the Yoruba descendants of which school?

A-P: Of the Government High School

L-P: O.K.., sing for us, so they know it is we that are here

A-P (clapping):

Here we're here o

Here we're here o

Here we're here, the folktales club!

Here we're here

Here we're here

A, a, we're here, the folktale club is here

A, a we're here, the folktale club is here

Ọkin is the king if birds, oh I should have stayed long in

the forest!

Lion is the king of animals, oh I should have stayed long in

the forest!

Folktales club, we're here today o

We're here with our play

(repeated many times, with lead-performer's occasional interjections, head, body and hands movements, also gown re-adjustments)

L-P: Thanks, my children

A-P: O-o!

L-P: A, a, you indeed made me proud. My *rara* poet made me proud. You all also made me proud. AH, I myself will make you happy today. I have some big big gifts for you, mighty mighty gifts that I want to offer to you all today. Do you want (the gifts) or do you not?

A-P: WE DO WANT

L-P: I myself will give you (the gifts). I said as our teacher has explained to us earlier, he explained that àlọ--folktale narration in Yorubaland is used to make you children happy. It's very true! In Yoruba culture, OUR ANCESTRAL FATHER ỌRUNMILA WHEN OUR ANCESTRAL FATHER LEFT THE HEAVEN FOR THE EARTH, he was speaking speeches (demonstrating with his side hands, one on top of the other, moving as if cutting something, the left below as if giving the right hand a support, occasionally rubbing his face with a side of his gown) in *ẹlọ, ẹlọ*, that is how our father Ọrunmila made his speeches. When he spoke, our ancestral father Ọrunmila talked about the creation of the world, when he spoke, our ancestral father Ọrunmila spoke about the gods. When he spoke, our father Ọrunmila spoke speeches in *ẹlọ, ẹlọ*. It is *ẹlọ* (the way Ọrunmila spoke) that the Yoruba converted to (waiting for the audience to complete it) ...

A-P: *Àlọ*--folktales.

L-P: It was the ẹlọ manner of Ọrunmila's speech that the Yoruba turned to (waiting for audience)

A-P: folktales!

L-P: Therefore we shall also start our speeches in *ẹlọ, ẹlọ*, and they will become what?

A-P: *Àlọ*--folktales!

L-P: Who are we here today?

A-P: We're the Folktale Club members

L-P: You'll see that I your leader whose name is Bọwale, Bọwale Kadir is my name. Our teacher advisor is (waiting for the audience to complete it) ...

A-P: Mr. Dada!

L-P: He is the father of us all. May God prolong his life.

A-P: *Ase*--let it be (oh God)!

L-P: Oduwa won't kill him young

A-P: *Àse*--let it be (oh God)!

L-P: Myself, your leader, Ọrunmila won't let me die before my parents eyes!

A-P: *Àṣẹ*--let it be (oh God)!

L-P: Oduwa, Ọkanji, he-who-blesses-one-where-one-least-expects, our ancestral father; hm-m (throwing forward fists of gratitude) our father who owns the land where the day breaks (lightens up) into the earth, and we call it *Ile-Ifẹ* today. *If* yes, it's our ancestral father who created us there. Oduwa will not abandon us.

A-P: *Àṣẹ*--let it be (oh God)!

L-P: THERE ARE SO MANY CLUBS IN THIS SCHOOL, but none is greater than ours.

A-P (a few): It's true, it's true, it's true.

L-P: Is it true or is it not?

A-P (all, in unison): IT IS TRUE

L-P (looking down on a paper): Now, we shall start to narrate folktales with songs (or without songs). We shall call upon Balogun Ajibọla, one of my children.

Folktale (A) 1:

Balogun (coming-out--wearing school uniform, a light-green head tie, with a multi-colored *ankara* wrapper around her hip, a light-green head tie, standing in front of the audience): Ààlọ o![3]

A-P: Ààlo!

Balogun: Àlọ mi lori furgbagbo!

A-P: O l'ori kini?

Balogun: It is about a mother and her three children. One day, the children asked their mother to allow them to go and witness some interesting performance somewhere. The mother said, "Don't go there," that whoever goes there would always stick to the spot. The children refused to listen to their mother's warnings. When their mother went out, they headed for the place of the performance. As soon as they arrived there, they stuck to the ground. They could not let

loose themselves. The mother searched almost everywhere for them but could not find them. But on reaching this farm, she found her three kids stuck to the ground. She told them that this was her warning to them that they mustn't come here, and that they would stick to the ground if they come, but since they have refused to listen to him, here they are now stuck to the ground. It is the kind of things children like you who would not listen suffer what you're now suffering. Their mother built a house around them, and brought food for them regularly. Whenever she brought their food, she would sing (dancing slowly but in accordance to the rhythm of the song):

Bọlasade, open the door o
Ogunsade, open the door o
Kọbọkọbọ, open the door o
It's me your mother
It's me your father
Oh, children who wouldn't listen to admonitions
And make their mother cry

A-P (clapping): (repeat after the narrator)

Balogun: They would then open the door and the mother would enter and give them their food, and return home. One day, Elephant observed what was happening, and said to himself that so there are human beings in that house. Indeed (he thought) they know that he was Elephant, and that he lived in this forest. Whoever came to this forest he ate. Since these people are daring him, he would go right there and would eat them. On getting there, he also sang (changes her voice to Elephant's voice):

Bọlasade, open the door o
Ogunsade, open the door o

Kọbọkọbọ, open the door o

It's me your mother

It's me your father

Oh, children who wouldn't listen to warnings

And make their mother cry

The three children listened attentively, and said to themselves that this voice wasn't their mother's. So they refused to open the door. They were so frightened, blaming themselves for causing this much trouble for themselves. They said that they would not open the door even if it meant they would starve to death. But soon later, their mother came and sang her song. They opened the door and she gave them their food. The Elephant observed how the mother sang her song, and said, so it was because he sang with his elephant's voice, not the mother's that made them refuse to open the door for him. He said he needed to use their mother's voice. He later went back and sang with the voice of the children's mother. As they opened the door, Elephant ate up one of them. Later when their mother came, she sang her song:

Bọlasade, open the door o

Ogunsade, open the door o

Kọbọkọbọ, open the door o

It's me your mother

It's me your father

Oh, children who wouldn't listen to admonitions

And make their mother cry

A-P (clapping): (repeat the songs after the narrator)

N-P: So they answered their mother (changes voice to resemble the trembling kids'):

Bọlasade, is dead o

Ogunsade, is (the only one) remaining

Kọbọkọbọ, is (the only one) remaining

We are your children

We indeed are the unlistening children

We made our mother cry

They opened the door for their mother. She gave them their food. This continued until Elephant ate up all the children. Elephant then moved to the house. When the children's mother returned to give her children food, she met the Elephant in the house!

The purpose for my folktale is to tell us that we should listen to our parents when they admonished us. Whatever they tell us we should listen to it and work with it. We should not become unlistening children.

L-P: PLEASE CLAP FOR HER

A-P: (clapping)

L-P (moving his cap to the front of his head): Didn't we learn from it?

A-P: WE LEARNED FROM IT

L-P: Oh you children of Oduwa!

A-P: O-O!

L-P: I told you that folktale in Yorubaland, that we tell it to children, one on top of the other, in *ẹlọ-ẹlọ*, so that you can learn from the folktales. You should see how much wisdom we have learned from the situation of the three children. They called their parents liars. They refused to listen to them. (Looking towards one of the members of the audience) Mulika, what happened to the children? Mulika?

Mulika (standing up): The three children did not listen to their parent's admonitions, and they lost their lives.

L-P: So my children, do please listen to your parents' admonitions. Oduwa will support you.

A-P: Àṣẹ--let it be (oh God)!

Folktale (A) 2:

L-P (turning from one side to the other, and finally to the left): Now I will call one of my children , Dupẹ Alabi, to give us another folktale, the fantastic among folktales.

Dupẹ Alabi (dressed in *ankara* blouse, with a head tie, comes to the front of the audience): Ààlọ o!

A-P: Ààlọ!

Dupẹ: My folktale is on co-wives, senior and junior wives. One day the senior wife gave birth to a baby, but the junior wife was barren. The senior wife who had the child had no cloth to tie the child on her back. She used banana leave to tie her child on her back. She went to the farm one day, on getting to the farm, she laid her baby in the shade of a tree, and went ahead to cut some dried trees with the ax. Soon Ọranran bird came to steal her baby, and went to eat it. When it was time for her to hear her child's cry, she didn't and thus decided to go and see what was the matter. She didn't see her baby. She started wailing, shedding tears from her eyes profusely, and went back home in tears. Her husband rebuked her, and the junior wife condemned her behavior. She continued to cry, and went to her parents and explained all what had happened to her. The junior wife also decided to go to the river to wash some bowls. The river flowed away the *igbakọ* belonging to the senior wife. She began to sing thus; (instructing the audience) when I say "Where about is my senior mate's igbakọ?" you say, "Flow on, flow on in the river, flow on!". Where about is my senior mate's igbakọ?

A-P (clapping, simultaneously with the narrator): Tere jojo ma bodo lọ tere!

Dupẹ: Where about is my senior mate's igbakọ?

A-P: Flow on, flow on in the river, flow on!

Dupẹ: Where about is my senior mate's igbakọ?

A-P: Flow on, flow on in the river, flow on!

Dupẹ: Where about is my senior mate's igbakọ?

A-P: Flow on, flow on in the river, flow on!

Dupẹ: She followed the floating igbakọ, and when it drowned, she looked everywhere for the igbakọ. As she was searching, she met Olodo, the River king, and Olodo said to her (changing her voice): What are you searching for? She answered him that she was searching for igbakọ which was carried away by the river. The River King said she was telling the truth. He said that if she could take care of the sore on his leg, he would give her the igbakọ back. But she said "Ah!" How can she be dressing a sore! She said she could not dress a sore because of igbakọ. She continued her search. Later she thought again about what Olodo had said to her. She wondered about what she could do. She must not go back home without the igbakọ. She went back to the Olodo, she dressed his sore, applied some medication. After applying the medication, Olodo told her to go to the back of his house, to pluck a leave that is silent. He asked her to pluck five. He warned her not to pluck the one that shouts, "pluck me, pluck me, pluck me!" He repeated that she was to pluck the one that is completely quiet. She went to the back of the house and plucked three from the ones that were completely quiet. She also plucked two of the ones that shout, "Pluck me, pluck me, pluck me". She then took to her heel. As she ran, she got to a spot and threw one on the ground. She saw the igbakọ she was looking for and some other riches. She continued back home, and still on the road, she threw another of the completely quiet ones, and found gold and copper necklaces, and many other riches. She continued her journey back home still. And again she stopped on another spot of the road and threw the third completely silent one on the ground. She got all the materials she had ever desired. And then she moved a little bit forward, and threw on the ground the one shouting "pluck me, pluck me, pluck me!" Suddenly from it poisonous bees began to chase her she and ran for her life. She then returned successfully home. She locked her room doors so that the senior wife would not see any of her riches. After locking the door, she threw on the ground the

second of the leaves shouting "pluck me, pluck me, pluck me!" Snakes, scorpions, all came out after her. The snakes bit her until she was dead.

The lesson of my tale is that if we have anything at all we should share them with others. We should stop making ourselves "eat-alone".

L-P: MY PEOPLE

A-P: Eh-e oo!

L-P: Did you enjoy the tale or not?

A-P: We enjoyed the tale

L-P: Let us sing that song again (holding the tip of his gown, and dancing on his seat): Where about is my senior mate's igbakọ?

A-P (clapping): Tere jojo ma bodo lọ tere!

L-P: Where about is my senior mate's igbakọ?

A-P: Flow on, flow on in the river, flow on!

L-P (standing up): Where about is my senior mate's igbakọ?

A-P (all standing up, clapping, dancing): Flow on, flow on in the river, flow on!

L-P (dancing): Where about is my senior mate's igbakọ?

A-P: Flow on, flow on in the river, flow on!

L-P (sitting down): did you enjoy the tale or not?

A-P: We enjoyed it

L-P (hands on the chest): Bọsẹ, what is the lesson we learned from the tale?

Bọsẹ (standing up, looks up): The folktale taught us that whatever we have we should be generous to others.

L-P: This folktale taught us that whatever we have we should be ... (waiting for the audience to join him in finishing the sentence)

L-P & A-P: GENEROUS TO OTHERS

L-P (facing another audience-performer): Silifa, what did this folktale teach us?

Silifa: It taught us that we should not consume alone riches that God gives us.

L-P (slowly so as to make audience-performers join him): It...taught

L-P & A-P: us that we should not consume alone riches that God gives us!

L-P: Oduwa will not let poisonous ẹain rain on us.

A-P: Àsẹ--let it be (oh God!)

L-P: Ọrunmila, he will not let poisonous things bite us

A-P: Àsẹ--let it be (oh God!)

Folktale (A) 3:

L-P: I will call another person from my children, Rafatu Alaya. (facing Rafatu) You too come out and narrate your own tale for us.

Rafatu Alaya (in head tie, traditional clothes on the school uniform, comes out, adjusts her wrapper, begins her folktale): Ààlọ o!

A-P: Ààlọ!

Rafatu: Àlọ mi l'ori furgbagbo

A-P: O l'ori kini?

Rafatu: It's about Kare's mother and Kare. Kare's mother sells popcorn and peanuts and fried fish. Whenever Kare went to sell these items, she stops at a place and eats up the popcorn and peanuts. Kare's mother warned him that whenever she caught him red handed she would punish him whatever way she deemed fit and Kare would have to live with that for a long time. One day Kare was out selling the items, he put his tray down and started as usual to consume popcorn and the peanuts. Everyone of the passers by said to him ... (instructing the audience) when I say "Kare, Kare", you'll say, "Kare'. (dancing) Kare, Kare!

A-P (clapping): Kare!

Rafatu: naughty child

A-P: Kare!

Rafatu: Whenever he goes selling

A-P: Kare!

Rafatu: Popcorn is in trouble

A-P: Kare!

Rafatu: Peanut is in trouble

A-P: Kare!

Rafatu: Fried fish is in trouble

A-P: Kare!

L-P: (takes over the lead, dancing, throwing his gown tip-sides over his shoulders) EH, KARE, KARE

A-P: Kare!

L-P: Whenever he goes selling

A-P: Kare!

L-P: Popcorn is in trouble

A-P: Kare!

L-P: Peanut is in trouble

A-P: Kare!

L-P: Fried fish is in trouble

A-P: Kare!

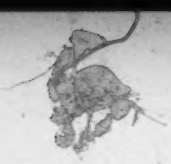
L-P: Eh, Kare, Kare

A-P: Kare!

L-P: Kare, Kare

A-P: Kare!

L-P: Whenever he goes selling



A-P: Kare!

L-P: Peanut is in trouble

A-P: Kare!

L-P: Fried fish is in trouble

A-P: Kare!

L-P (ending the song and going to sit down): Popcorn is in trouble

A-P: Kare!

Rafatu: Later, his mother came to collect the selling tray from him. She told him that if he is so sure of himself he should approach her the following day for another tray of the selling items. In short, his mother from the beginning pleaded with him to help hawk her items, but he refused to the end. However, Kare sensed some movement in a house close to theirs, and saw that they put down food; even without knowing what the food was meant for, he secretly went there and ate it up. Obviously it was not food meant for him. He died that very day! The lesson in my folktale is that whatever our mother tells us we should listen and heed it, and we should not steal what belongs to others.

L-P: Ah, let us sing this folktale's song once more. Now stand up everyone. Kare, Kare

(almost everyone stands up, claps, dances, L-P leading)

A-P: Kare!

L-P: Kare, Kare!

A-P: Kare!

L-P: Popcorn is in trouble

A-P: Kare!

L-P: Peanut is in trouble

A-P: Kare!

L-P (sitting down): Ah, we enjoyed this folktale very much. It just ended suddenly. Now I'll call another one from our children. She will also narrate a tale for us. But before then, (looks

around, points to an Audience-Performer) Kẹmi, what did we learn from this folktale? Kẹmi wearing the head tie, eh?

Kẹmi: It taught us not to be wicked to our mother

L-P (asks the entire audience): It taught us not do what?

A-P: NOT TO BE WICKED TO OUR MOTHER

L-P: Eh, my children, if you are wicked to your mother, you do see what became of Kare. May God ensure that our eyes do not see terrible things!

A-P: *Àsẹ*--let it be (oh God!)

L-P: Oduwa will not allow your eyes to be attracted to bad things

A-P: *Àsẹ*--let it be (oh God!)

L-P: What Kare's eyes saw, God will not let us see them

A-P: *Àsẹ*--let it be (oh God!)

L-P: Ọrunmila will guard all of you for me

A-P: *Àsẹ*--let it be (oh God!)

Folktale (A) 4

L-P: Now, we'll call another person from our children to give us a tale. What is the name of the child? Rukayatu Ẹruke, she will also narrate a tale for us.

Rukayatu (comes out, wearing the school uniform, and a white wrapper, and head tie): Ààlọ o!

A-P: Ààlọ!

Rukayatu: Àlọ mi l'ori furgbagbo

A-P: O l'ori kini?

Rukayatu: It is about a woman, a man, and the woman's children. The man has extremely large lips, mámárimàmà! One day, the woman asked one of her children to get her some burning charcoal. She first sent the youngest child. When he got there, the man's lips caught his attention, and was completely absorbed by the sight and did not leave the same spot

looking at the lips. So this man noticed him and was singing thus, (instructing the audience) you'll be saying "Mámá". Owner of extremely large lips!

A-P: Mámá!

Rukayatu: Owner of extremely large lips

A-P: Mámá

Rukayatu: You're here to fetch the burning charcoal

A-P: Mámá

Rukayatu: Or is it (my) lips you have come to watch?

A-P: Mámá

Rukayatu: Oh lips, go there and swallow him

A-P: Swallowed!

Rukayatu: Oh lips, go there and swallow him

A-P: Swallowed!

So the man with the large lips swallowed the boy. When his mother waited and waited and did not see him return, she sent another child, older than the first. However, he also got caught up in the sight. The man also sang for him. Owner of extremely large lips!

A-P: Mámá

Rukayatu: Owner of extremely large lips

A-P: Mámá

Rukayatu: You're here to fetch the burning charcoal

A-P: Mámá

Rukayatu: Or is it (my) lips you have come to watch?

A-P: Mámá

Rukayatu: Oh lips, go there and swallow him

A-P: Swallowed!

Rukayatu: Oh lips, go there and swallow him

A-P: Swallowed!

So this man also swallowed this boy. When, again it became obvious that the second son was not going to be home on time, his mother ask the third child to go and fetch her the burning charcoal. This one was also older than the second one. But he was caught up in the same sight, and the extremely large lips man sang for him. Owner of the extremely large lips!

A-P: Mámá

Rukayatu: Owner of extremely large lips

A-P: Mámá

Rukayatu: You're here to fetch the burning charcoal

A-P: Mámá

Rukayatu: Or is it (my) lips you have come to watch?

A-P: Mámá

Rukayatu: Oh lips, go there and swallow him

A-P: Swallowed!

Rukayatu: Oh lips, go there and swallow him

A-P: Swallowed!

Rukayatu: He swallowed the third boy also. The mother sent all her children one after the other and they all got swallowed. Since none of them was back, she had no option but to go there herself. But having smelt a rat, she decided to arm herself with knives, and other fighting tools. As soon as she got there, she saw the man with the extremely large lips. She had never seen such lips in her life, and was soon caught up also in the sight. And another session of songs started. "Owner of the extremely large lips!"

A-P: Mámá

Rukayatu: Owner of extremely large lips

A-P: Mámá

Rukayatu: You're here to fetch the burning charcoal

A-P: Mámá

Rukayatu: Or is it (my) lips you have come to watch?

A-P: Mámá

Rukayatu: Oh lips, go there and swallow him

A-P: Swallowed!

Rukayatu: Oh lips, go there and swallow him

A-P: Swallowed!

Rukayatu: As the man with the large lips swallowed this woman she immediately realized what was happening and used her knife. She cut his inside with her knife and the man fell down dead. She cut open his stomach and all the children he had swallowed were met inside. *The lesson in this tale is that whatever the eyes see, the mouth does not have to tell.

L-P (faces the audience): Hun-un, eh, did you enjoy it or not?

A-P: We enjoyed it.

(L-P stands and dances, his poet also dances with him)

L-P : Owner of the extremely large lips

A-P: Mámá

L-P: Owner of extremely large lips

A-P: Mámá

L-P: You're here to fetch the burning charcoal

A-P: Mámá

L-P: Or is it (my) lips you have come to watch?

A-P: Mámá

L-P: Oh lips, go there and swallow him

A-P: Swallowed!

L-P: Oh lips, go there and swallow him

A-P: Swallowed!

L-P: Ah, I enjoyed all your folktales today. (facing the audience) Is there anyone who has extremely large lips among you?

A-P (answering in many voices): NOT AT ALL

L-P (peeping at the A-P's lips): O.K.. let me see your lips one by one

A-P: (their mouths one by one, some pushing the lips forward)

L-P (moving his eyes around, after looking at about two members, goes to sit down) My children do not have extremely big lips. Thanks. I enjoyed all your folktales. They were more interesting than the yesterday's and the day before's. Or isn't it so?

A-P (different answers): Yes, it is/ no it isn't!

L-P: Did you remember that four days ago Akara Oogun (a popular television actor) was here. Akara Oogun, The man of way! Uhn, when Akara Oogun came here four days ago, didn't you see him?

A-P: Yes we did.

L-P (moves his fingers up & down, his hands lifted): He talked very expensive talk with us. All what he said came out also in your folktales today. The first tale taught us not to be greedy, wasn't it so?

A-P: Yes, it was.

L-P: The second one taught us we should not be wicked... (waiting for the audience to complete, and they did together with him)

L-P & A-P: to our mothers

L-P: The third one taught us to (takes his fingers towards his mouth) to listen to ...

AP & LP: our parents admonitions

LP: The fourth one taught us that (taking two fingers touches his eyes, also moves his head towards them) whatever the eyes see the mouth doesn't have to talk. It happened to brothers when their mouths could not keep everything their eyes saw they did fell into trouble or didn't they?

A-P & L-P: Yes they did fell into trouble

L-P: It is not all what the eyes see that the mouth has to tell. Don't become people with big mouths, or mouths unable to stick together, my children. OH YOU CHILDREN OF ODUWA

A-P: Eh-o!

L-P: Oduwa warned us through the folktales. Oduwa brought folktales to warn us. So let us listen to the warnings of Oduwa. It is now time for *àlọ àpámọ*, riddles.

Riddles

(All the riddle performances continue non-stop from the beginning to the end; the space between riddles doesn't signify a stop)

1.

L-P (turns his head around the audience, moves his eyes around): Now that we have narrated some folktales, it is time for riddles (stands up, holds his big gown by its tip sides) Ah, the aged tree of my father, the aged tree of my father, (demonstrating) when you want to climb my father's tree you climb it from its head, not from its bottom. Who knows it?

A-P (some raise their hands): I KNOW IT

L-P (points at an audience-performer): Kabiru, tell us what it is.

Kabiru: It is a well.

L-P: Please clap for him!

A-P: (clapping)

L-P (walks around, demonstrates). The well is my father's aged tree. Whenever you want to climb a well, no one starts from its bottom, you start from its head! (looks at the audience) From where do we climb a well?

A-P: From its head!

L-P (almost simultaneously with the audience): From the head we climb the well.

2.

L-P: Àlọ o!

A-P: Ààlọ!

L-P (walks, his gown's tips on his shoulders): Ààlọ o!

A-P: Àlọ!

L-P (demonstrates): We're going to Ọyọ, it faces Ọyọ, we're coming back from Ọyọ, it faces Ọyọ. Who knows it?

A-P (some quickly raise their hands, each almost jumping from their seat) I KNOW IT

L-P (points): Basiratu, tell us

Basiratu (stands up): Drum

L-P (demonstrates, pretends to be drumming): It is gan-gan drum. You'll see that when you face Ọyọ now, the gan-gan drum faces Ọyọ, (turning back) if you turn back from Ọyọ, your gan-gan drum still faces where?

A-P: Still faces Ọyọ

L-P & **A-P** (simultaneously): It still faces Ọyọ

3.

L-P: Ààlọ o!

A-P: Ààlọ!

L-P (turns, throws his gown tips): A TINY STICK touches the ground *touches the sky*

A-P (most hands up): I, I, I

L-P: Who knows it?

A-P (hands up): I KNOW IT

L-P: Kẹmi, tell us

Kẹmi (stands): It is the rain

L-P: The rain is the tiny stick that touches the ground and touches the sky. YOU WILL SEE THAT WHEN IT IS RAINING, tiny from sky to the ground.

4.

L-P (hesitates, then suddenly): Ààlọ o!

A-P: Ààlọ!

L-P (adjusts his cap): Ààlọ o!

A-P: Ààlọ!

L-P: It doesn't have hands, and doesn't have legs, yet asks me to bring my baby. What is it?

A-P (hands up): I KNOW IT

L-P (pointing): Silifa tell us

Silifa (stands): It is the mat

L-P: She said it's the mat. Clap for her.

A-P: (clapping; some unclear underground murmuring)

5.

L-P: Ààlọ o!

A-P: Àlọ!

L-P (walks fast as if running to the A-P's sitting in his right hand, and then walks back): It doesn't have hands, doesn't have legs, bush jumps down "Kiii!" in the bush.

A-P (many hands): I KNOW IT, I KNOW IT

L-P (pointing): Dupẹ, tell us

Dupẹ: Mucus!

L-P (throws his gown tips): It IS THE MUCUS. Please clap for her.

A-P: (clapping)

6.

L-P (walks around): Ààlọ o!

A-P: Ààlọ!

L-P: Ààlọ o!

A-P: Ààlọ.

L-P (demonstrates, using one finger): A half piece of colanut, enough food all the way to Ọyọ

A-P (hands up, individual's voice can be heard as L-P): I know it, I know it

L-P (his two arms on each other, moves around, sobers, slows from choosing the person to answer): O.k., I'll call a man now. Muhammadu. Tell us!

Muhammadu (stands up): IT IS THE TONGUE

L-P: It's the tongue! Please clap for Muhammadu.

A-P: (clapping)

7.

L-P (moves around): Ààlọ o!

A-P: Ààlọ!

L-P (moves around, sometimes running from one side of the audience to the other): The witch gave birth to some babies, when she gave birth, all her babies are witches!

A-P (a few hands up): I know it, I know it!

L-P: I'm coming. The woman is a witch. When she gave birth, she gave birth to ...

(intentionally prolonging it, throwing his gown tips from both hands, engaging the audience)

Did you hear me well? She gave birth to witches

A-P (a few hands still up): I know it, I know it

L-P (pointing, moves towards an audience-performer): Rainatu tell us.

Rainatu (stands rather slowly, uncertainly): It's the idol

L-P & some A-Ps: Ah, a!

L-P: Call Kun-un

A-P: KUN-UN

L-P (holds his gown): Kun-un

A-P: Kun-un

L-P (moves towards Rainatu, his hands towards her mouth): I take it to rub your mouth

A-P (a few hands still, lowly): I know it

L-P (running first away from Rainatu, then back towards her): help me to rub it on her mouth

A-P (hands still up, some move toward Rainatu): We use it to rub your mouth (Rainatu). I know it, I know it!

L-P (moves): A witch who gave birth to two hundred children, she gave birth to two hundred children. All her children, she gave birth to them as witches. I said who know it?

A-P (more hands up): I KNOW IT, I KNOW IT

L-P (looks carefully at the audience): Sakira tell us.

Sakira (stands up): Pepper

L-P: IT IS PEPPER. Pepper that fights like war! When pepper hots in one's eyes, it hots, hots, hots. When pepper hots in the mouth, it hots, hots, hots. It is the pepper. All pepper's children, what are they? Tough! Pepper itself, war! It is the pepper.

8.

L-P: Ààlọ o!

A-P: Ààlọ!

L-P: Ààlọ o!

A-P: Àlọ!

L-P (raising up his gown with the right hand, slowly, pace reducing): Ààlọ o!

A-P: Ààlọ.

L-P (seems to be reading from a paper): What is it that eats with the king, and would not clear the food plates.

A-P (raise hands): I know it

L-P: Now, Dupẹ, tell us

Dupẹ: It's the flies

L-P: What did she say it was?

A-P: Flies

L-P: What did she say it was?

A-P: Flies!

9.

L-P: Ààlọ o!

A-P: Àlọ!

L-P (movements continue): Black pot has its back resting on the bush

A-P (hands up): I know it, I know it!

L-P: O.k. let someone tell us what it is

An audience member: The Snail

L-P: What did she call it?

A-P: The Snail

L-P: Black pot has its back resting on the bush, what did she call it?

A-P: The Snail

10.

L-P: What passes in front of the king's palace and does not pay homage to the king?

A-P (hands up): I know it, I know it, I know it!

L-P (pointing at a member): Madakẹ, tell us

Madakẹ (stands up): It is the thunder!

L-P: What did she call it?

A-P: The thunder

L-P: What did she call it?

A-P: The thunder

L-P: Please clap for her

A-P: (clapping)

11.

L-P: Ààlọ o!

A-P: Ààlọ!

L-P (slowly, possibly reading from a note): Ààlọ o!

A-P: Ààlọ!

L-P (after some silence): Ààlọ o!

A-P: Àlọ!

L-P: Ààlọ o!

A-P: Àlọ!

L-P: White hair that plays with the king, who knows it?

A-P (hands up): I know it

L-P: White hair that plays with the king, (pointing at an audience-performer): What is it?

A-Performer: Palmwine

L-P: A keg of palmwine! Please clap for him. (sitting down, majestically, demonstrating) Let us say that I'm the king, sitting in my majesty, and they bring to me a keg of wine. In the keg of wine, what will be coming from its mouth? It is the white sparkling of the wine. (standing up) It is the white hair that plays with the king. It is the white hair doing what?

A-P: Playing with the king!

12.

L-P: Ààlọ o!

A-P: Ààlọ!

L-P: Ààlọ o!

A-P: Ààlọ!

L-P: What plays with the king and knocks the king on his head?

A-P: I know it, I know it

L-P: Tunrayọ tell us

Tunrayọ: It is the shaving Knife

L-P: Yes, it's the sharp knife. It is. It's the one that plays with the king and does what?

A-P: Knocks him on his head

13.

L-P: Ààlọ o!

A-P: Àlọ!

L-P: Ààlọ o!

A-P: Àlọ!

L-P: Ààlọ o!

A-P: Àlọ!

L-P: Oh you my children

A-P: Oh-o!

L-P (throwing his gown on his shoulders): Oh you my children!

A-P: Ho-o!

L-P: Whoever knows this one will have some money. Some gifts. (smiling, rather kidding?) If you know it you get some gifts, if you don't you get some gifts. (moving around) Àlọ o!

A-P: Àlọ!

L-P: Are you ready?

A-P: Yes we are

L-P: You're ready?

A-P: Yes

L-P (demonstrating): A rock sáá́á́, a rock sàà̀à̀, a piece of dried tuber of yam! Yes here I come!

(turning to his poet) My poet, praise me let my head swell!

Praise Poet:

Alabi the spring of majesty, owner of the ẹwẹlẹ mat

Two kings, three kings, the offspring of eighteen ebiti

L-P (facing the poet): Thank you, thank you.

Praise Poet:

Kakaka, ebiti kakaka

Ebiti that doesn't hear (my language) cannot kill me.

L-P: Thank you!

Praise Poet:

Whoever belittles you

Is playing with danger!

L-P: It's me you're praising. Ah, (demonstrating) A rock sáá́á́, a rock sàà̀à̀, a tuber of dried yam!

Who knows it?

A-P (hands up): I know it, I know it

L-P (pointing to a member): What did you call it?

An audience-performer: flowing river

L-P (to the audience): Say hun-un-un!

A-P: Hun-un-un!

L-P: We rub her mouth with it

A-P: We rub her mouth with it

L-P: There are gifts. If you want gifts, (dancing, turning it to song), Who wants a gift?

A-P: I want a gift

L-P: Who wants a gift?

A-P: I want a gift

L-P (pointing to a member): Hun-un?

Member: It is the ocean, flowing ocean!

L-P: Ah, a! A rock sááá, a rock sààà, a tuber of dried yam (pointing to another audience-performer)

An audience-performer: It is the grinding stone!

L-P: Ah, a!

A-P (many hands up):

L-P: (pointing to another member)

Member: It is God

L-P: It is not God (pointing to another member)

Member: A new market!

L-P: It is not a new market. (turning to the audience) O.k. do you want me to say it? (pointing at another member)

Member: The sky!

L-P: SANMỌ. I will give you a gift. (sacarstically) I'll carry your school fees to the end of your high school

A-P (some laughing, some commenting silently): Ah, a a!

L-P (demonstrating): À rock sáá̀á̀, a rock sàà̀à, is the sky. A tuber of dried yam is the moon. When the moon comes out the sun would not. When the sun comes out, the moon will not. A rock sáá̀á̀, a tuber of dried yam. are you enjoying my performance?

A-P: Yes we are.

L-P (facing the poet): Please praise me again

Poet:

Alabi Ikan

Offspring of ẹlẹni ẹwẹlẹ

L-P: That is me!

Poet:

The offspring of olodo ọ́bà

L-P: Singer, I feel like giving you my big gown.

Poet:

The offspring of ọlọfa majọ

Who derives his name from the tube of yam

Fighting it out is the custom of Ọfa.

L-P (addressing the poet): Ah,a. I'll see you when we get home. I'll see you. I'll see you secretly. Àlọ o!

A-P: Ààlọ!

L-P: Ààlọ o!

A-P: Ààlọ!

L-P (to the audience): Sing the Folktale Club song

A-P (clapping):

Here we're here o

Here we're here o

Here we're here, the folktales club!

Here we're here

Here we're here

A, a, we're here, the folktale club is here

A, a we're here, the folktale club is here

Ọkin is the king of birds, oh I should have stayed long in

the forest!

Lion is the king of animals, oh I should have stayed long in

the forest!

Folktales club, we're here today o

We're here with our play

(The session ends with more general admonitions from the L-P, and more songs)

Folktale Session (B):

The Home & Ilọrin Folktales

The following folktale session took place at Ile-Ololu, Ita-Ogunbọ, Ilọrin, Nigeria in December 1997. It started with about 20 members but gradually grew to about 50 people by the middle of the performance session. More than 90% of the participants were my extended family members, close and distant relatives, assembled from all parts of Ilọrin. All age groups were represented, from about 1 year old to over 50 years old. Generally the

performers appeared in the common Ilọrin dresses, long *Jalabiya*, buba, shirts, caps, and head ties of various kinds and colors. The eldest woman in the session, who is my mother, had her head covered. My step-mother was also in the performance and so was a close relative of hers, also known and close to me. All the elder members of the performance were non-literate, and most of the younger members attended both Western and Islamic schools. The main difference between this session and session A is that this session took place in the home atmosphere, with people who are mostly blood relatives. Although about 40 percent of the audience came from a single family, it was not easy to identify who was a family member and who was not because of the strong ties among the children and the elder members. I shall transcribe here only the parts of the folktale which are audible to me, although elements from all the tales shall be used in my discussions in this and the next chapters. Audience Performers (A-P) sat on benches forming a semi-circle, and the Lead-Performer sat on the same bench, in the center. Some of the time Narrator-Performers remained on their seats, and sometimes they stood up to perform. All the performances were conducted at the back of the Ile-Ololu compound building, in Ilọrin Yoruba.

Preliminary to Session B

L-P (standing, wearing Jalabiya, holding his cap on his hands): *Alahumma ssali, ala Muhammad wasalim, wa ala alihi, wa ashabihi wa salim.*

A-P (sitting): (repeat)

L-P: Let us recite "*Alhamdulilahi*" ten times

A-P: (recite "*Alhamdulillahi*" ten times)

L-P: After expressing our gratitude (to God), we ask God, this session we're starting, may God enable us to do it.

A-P: Àmin.

L-P: May God (support us) in the name of the prophet Muhammad.

A-P: May the peace and blessings of God be upon him

L-P: What we're here to do may God do it for us

A-P: Àmin.

L-P: Our brother that is now abroad (word, "abroad" said in English), we're doing this for him, whatever he is going to do with it, may he succeed.

A-P: Àmin.

L-P: In the name of the One God

A-P: Àmin.

L-P: In the name of "be and it is"--*kun-fa-yakun*

A-P: Àmin.

L-P: In the blessing of *Alam-nashraha*

A-P: (recite *alam nashraha*--a chapter of the Quran--94: 1-8)

L-P: Now I want each person to introduce him or herself (points to the first member by his right-hand-side)

Audience-Performer: Tajudeen

L-P: Tajudeen what? Opomàlu, isn't it?

Tajudeen: Opomàlu

L-P: (conducts the introduction all round, asking each person to stand up and announce their names. Also introduces the eldest woman. A baby's crying can be heard from the background) Now it's time for our mother. She is our mother. As we're here, she is the one that brought us here. She is our mother Bilikisu Na'Allah.

Bilikisu: In Ilọrin, Nigeria.

Audience-Performer (to someone just arriving for the performance): Sister Iyabọ come in, don't remain standing.

L-P & A-P (beckoning to a few just arriving): Now come in

A-Performer (bearing a baby on her back): My name is Iyabọ Na'Allah Gold

A-Performer: I am Sarafadeen Sa'adudeen Gold

L-P (consults with Bilikisu): (silent talk)

Bilikisu: I am Abdul-Rasheed Na'Allah's mother, Ilọrin, Nigeria.

L-P: *Al-hamdulillahi*. It seems to me we have all named our names. It seems I am the only person who hasn't named his name. So (said in English), my name is Muhammad Jamiu Na'Allah Gold, Ile Ololu, Ita-Ogunbọ, Ilọrin, Nigeria.
(a baby heard crying). (in English) So, we shall start what we are here for today. *Àlọ apamọ̀* and *àpágbè* (folktales and riddles). Our mother will give us her own folktales, so listen. We shall chorus wherever we need to. If it is riddles, (in English) so, they will ask us and we shall answer. Please don't make noise. (takes his seat) Now let's start (the tales).

Folktale (B) 1

Bilikisu (remains seated): It is this spinster (no pejorative connotation intended, only means unmarried woman in all uses in this session), all the world wanted her hand in marriage but she refused. ... (seems to have remembered something) Ààlọ o!

A-P (a few responses): Àlọ

Bilikisu (to the audience): You'll say "Àlọ"

A-P (more responses): Ààlọ!

Bilikisu: Ààlọ o!

A-P: Ààlọ!

Bilikisu: This spinster all the world wanted to marry her but she refused. No one knows she was in love with a fish. Later, THERE WAS WATER SHORTAGE, a terrible water drought in the whole of the community. People would go in search of water from very early in the morning, and will come back late in the night. Whenever this spinster went, she came back quite early with water. A'a, all the people in the community were wondering, and they often asked themselves, "Where is this spinster getting water." Here they were older, suffering looking for water from dawn to dusk. One day, her parents asked a young boy to follow her to fetch water. When they reached the bush, they came to a river. (facing the audience) You'll be saying, "Fish my husband your eyes is charming." So when she arrived at the river , she started singing, "Fish my charming husband" (looking at the audience to chorus the refrain),

A-P: Fish my charming husband

Bilikisu: He took me to serere

A-P: Fish my charming husband

Bilikisu: He took me to sarara

A-P: Fish my charming husband

Bilikisu: Ọsarara, eyes of water

A-P: Fish my charming husband

Bilikisu: Eyes of water, flowing gorgeously

A-P: Fish my charming husband

Bilikisu: Oh Fish we can't be barren

A-P: Fish my charming husband

Bilikisu: Barrenness, not for us!

A-P: Fish my charming husband

Bilikisu: The Fish came out of the river. He opened the door to his house for them and took them inside. He fetched water for them both. He asked the spinster to stay with him for a little

while, and they talked and did everything. Later they took their water home. When they arrived home, the small boy narrated to their parents, (changes her voice) "I know why my sister is able to get water easily. She is marrying a Fish, and this Fish ensures she gets water regularly." He told them that his sister and the Fish did this and that. The parents weren't happy. They collected machetes, cutlasses, hatchets. They sent the spinster on some errand to a place twenty miles away. They asked the boy to lead them to the river. When they arrived there, the boy sang the song usually sung by his sister. "Fish my charming husband,"

A-P: Fish my charming husband

Bilikisu: He took me to serere

A-P: Fish my charming husband

Bilikisu: He took me to sarara

A-P: Fish my charming husband

Bilikisu: Ọsarara, eyes of water

A-P: Fish my charming husband

Bilikisu: Eyes of water, flowing gorgeously

A-P: Fish my charming husband

Bilikisu: Oh Fish we can't be barren

A-P: Fish my charming husband

Bilikisu: Barrenness, not for us!

A-P: Fish my charming husband

Bilikisu: This Fish thought about it that this voice did not resemble his lover's voice. This boy intensifies his song, saying again, "Fish my serere husband",

A-P: Fish my charming husband

Bilikisu: He took me to serere

A-P: Fish my charming husband

Bilikisu: He took me to sarara

A-P: Fish my charming husband

Bilikisu: Ọsarara, eyes of water

A-P: Fish my charming husband

Bilikisu: Eyes of water, flowing gorgeously

A-P: Fish my charming husband

Bilikisu: Oh Fish we can't be barren

A-P: Fish my charming husband

Bilikisu: Barrenness, not for us!

A-P: Fish my charming husband

Bilikisu: The Fish finally decided to come out of the river, and he opened his door. As soon as he opened it, the people brought out their machetes, cutlasses, hatchets, and descended heavily on the Fish, and killed the Fish. After killing the Fish, ALL OF THEM, they carried it home. When they reached home, they divided it among themselves. Meanwhile the spinster was not yet back.

Audience-Performer (a side comment, to someone): Turn off your radio!

Bilikisu (breaking her narration, so fast): They said you should put off your radio! (now continues) When the spinster returned, she did not even wait, she took her bucket and headed for the river. Everybody said to themselves, "Eh, let her go. After all, the person she's going to see we have killed." So the spinster reached the river. She sang and sang. She started thinking, "Could be that they have killed my lover Fish?" She entered the bush, frustrated, depressed. Then not long after that, the Tortoise wanted to burn the bush. Reaching there, he saw her, and started warning her, (changes her voice), "Leave the place I want to burn the bush" she didn't answer. The Tortoise said again, "Leave the place I want to burn the bush," she didn't answer. The Tortoise went to report to the king, saying, (changes her voice again), "King, I want to burn

the bush, but there's this spinster who would not leave the place. I warned and warned and warned, but she wouldn't answer me." The king told him to go ahead and burn the bush. Now, this spinster's mother is a cloth dyer. The Tortoise made sure he burned this spinster separately. He went to the town to sell the ashes, and finally sold it to her mother. After buying the ashes, she poured them in her dyeing pot, and was going to stir it. But the *olokiti* pot kept singing, saying (instructing the audience), you'll say, "On the day to eat, on the day to drink, on the day to break everything to finish". So they had started to take from the dyeing water, and *olokiti* pot started singing, saying, "Sobaso"

A-P: On the day to eat,
On the day to drink,
On the day to break everything to finish

Bilikisu: Ah, this is this! They couldn't believe their ears. They again fetch from the dye water. Olokiti still started singing, "Sobaso"

A-P: On the day to eat,
On the day to drink,
On the day to break everything to finish

Bilikisu: "Ah, a! What kind of strange thing is this?! Please people come to my aid!" the spinster's mother was afraid. She didn't know what it was that could be singing from the *olokiti* pot. All the people around, including her family members, quickly came to her aid. They asked to repeat the fetching of the dye, and as she did, the olokiti sang again, "Sobaso",

A-P: On the day to eat,
On the day to drink,

On the day to break everything to finish

Bilikisu: Everybody said this was more than they could chew. They went to the king's palace to inform the king. The king immediately realized what had happened. He asked where the woman got the ashes from, "wasn't Tortoise who sold it to you," he asked. He said to them that he knew the cause. He said he was the one who gave Tortoise the authority to burn the bush, and thus the girl with it, and that it was the girl singing her sorrow. The people were furious. They descended on the king, beating him, and almost killing him, in fact removing him from the throne. The lesson in my talk is that if any of us is appointed into a position of responsibility in a town, a king, if they tell him anything he must investigate. He must bring the people together and consult with them before taking decisions. This is the reason why they killed the king. This is the end of my folktale, gbangbalako, this is the end of my story gbangbalako. If my gong does not sound three times, then say I'm lying (she made three sounds, "pon, pon, pon" with her mouth).

A-P: (clapping)

Folktale (B) 2

Bilikisu: Ààlọ o!

A-P: Ààlọ!

Bilikisu: Once there was a beautiful spinster. Everyone wanted to marry her but she wouldn't. Rain and Fire, who were bosom friends also fell in love with her. They were popular, and everyone knew them as friends. But with this spinster, they would not be friends, they were ready to fight it out. They contacted the spinster's parents, and they fixed a day for them both to fight it out. Whoever wins would marry the beautiful spinster. On the appointed day and time,

the sky was so dark, the cloud had formed and was ready to rain. Fire was burning furiously, RIRIRIRI. Everyone was singing, saying, "This is Fire indeed"!

A-P (clapping): Aranta!

Bilikisu: This is rain indeed

A-P: Aranta!

L-P: I'll either marry Fire, or Rain

A-P: Aranta!

L-P: This is Fire indeed

A-P: Aranta!

L-P: This is Rain indeed

A-P: Aranta!

L-P: I'll either marry Fire, or Rain

A-P: Aranta!

Bilikisu: Fire, so red and beautiful

A-P: Aranta

Bilikisu: Rain, black and gorgeous

A-P: Aranta

Bilikisu: I'll either marry Fire, or Rain

A-P: Aranta

Bilikisu: The cloud made noise, "RIRIRIRI". Fire made noise, "HAHAHAHA". A, a tension was very high. The battle would start any minute. The spinster continued to sing, "This is Fire indeed",

A-P (clapping): Aranta!

Bilikisu: This is Rain indeed

A-P: Aranta!

L-P: I'll either marry Fire, or Rain

A-P: Aranta!

L-P: This is Fire indeed

A-P: Aranta!

L-P: This is Rain indeed

A-P: Aranta!

L-P: I'll either marry Fire, or Rain

A-P: Aranta!

Bilikisu: Fire, so red and beautiful

A-P: Aranta

Bilikisu: Rain, black and gorgeous

A-P: Aranta

Bilikisu: I'll either marry Fire, or Rain

A-P: Aranta

Bilikisu: To cut the story short, Rain suddenly started raining "WIIIIII". It defeated Fire, and carried the spinster away. This is the end of my story gbanganlako, this is the end of my story gbangbalako. If my gong does not sound three times, then say I'm lying (she made three sounds, "pon, pon, pon" with her mouth).

L-P: Clap for her!

A-P: (clapping)

Folktale (B) 3

L-P: Brother Taye, you can give us a tale now.

Taye: Ààlọ o!

A-P: Àlọ!

Taye: Àlọ mi l'ori furgbagbo

A-P: O lori kini?

Taye: It's about Tortoise and the Birds. (a word in English) So, it happened that the Birds did a thanksgiving ceremony every year somewhere in the sky to thank God for His mercies on them. On that occasion, they provided food, drinks and other amenities of comfort for their guests. One day when the Birds in Ijapa's neighborhood were about to go to that year's celebration, the Tortoise was sitting in front of his house with his wife and children. Tortoise was the first to talk to them, (changes his voice) "With all these your wonderful dressings, where are you all heading for?" They answered him that they were going for the annual celebration. Ijapa then said to them, "Please let me come with you. When we get there other Birds will be able to wonder what kind of creature I am, (and that would even make you more popular having brought me there)" They all agreed to take Tortoise with them. One by one, the Birds gave Tortoise one feather each. Together they flew to the venue in the sky and took their seats. Soon the celebration started. But Ijapa suddenly began to think. He said to himself, (changes voice again) "Soon the hosts will begin to bring food." We all do know Tortoise with his cunningness. He said that his friends would all want to eat from the food brought to their seats, and he would not have enough to satisfy him. He thought and thought over what to do. Then he talked to them, (voice changes) : "Listen my friends. This is not a place to come without individual's names. We should all have our individual's name. " Ijapa then suggested a different name for each Bird. He said, (pointing a finger to imaginary Birds, one by one" your name will be "Samangiri", you, "Kara", you, "Tamba". In short he gave each of them a name.

he then said his own name will be "All-of-you". Tortoise said, "Do you understand me? All-of-you is the name that I will answer to." All his friends said it was o.k. with them. So the ceremony continued and soon they began to serve food. They brought rice, well-cooked rice and fish, meat, and many other things like that. On reaching Tortoise's corner, the servers said, (changes voice) "Here is food", put them down and moved to another corner. When the other Birds began to move towards the food, saying "Tortoise, its time. Let's eat." Tortoise said quickly to them, "Wait a minute. Let us ask who the food is meant for. Usually when they bring food like this, they bring for guests one by one." The Birds said, *to ask who the food is brought for?* He said it was the appropriate thing to do. So they asked the hosts who the food was meant for. The host replied, "All of you, of course". Tortoise immediately said to his friends, "Who is 'all of you'," they said it was him. Tortoise then ate all the food alone. The Birds were saying, (demonstrating) "they will soon bring our own food." But when they served another round of food, and the Birds said "Oh yes this is ours" and wanted to begin to eat, Ijapa again asked them to inquire first who the food was meant for. On asking the hosts replied "for all of you", and others again agreed it must be for Tortoise, and Tortoise again emptied the entire bowl. And with so many other rounds of different kinds of food, they always said it was for "all of you" and Tortoise always ate them. Finally they brought tea, bread, cake, other such food, and Ijapa again used the same cunningness and ate them all. In fact, one of the Birds had said that they must all have the tea together, but Tortoise insisted it was not a civilized behavior, that in such ceremonies, it was always respectable to ask. In short, all the Birds, friends of Tortoise, were so angry that all the food brought had been meant for him. They complained aloud, "How can we come to a ceremony and Tortoise ate all the food, not even once did we have some for us. How can we have eaten anything today when this ceremony is approaching its end!" They ended it by bringing palmwine. But again, Tortoise drank it all. The person who lead Tortoise and all his friends to the ceremony became so angry that he told Tortoise to give him back his feather. He collected it and left. All the other Birds one by one collected their feathers and left. When the last person came to collect his feather, Tortoise said to

him, (voice change) "Please let me talk to you before you go." The Bird said, "PLEASE LEAVE ME ALONE. Before I go what!" Ijapa said to him, (soberly)"How will I be able to fly back home now that you have all collected your feathers? I thought you would help me." The Bird said to him, "Oh you're complaining of not being able to fly back. Was your behavior today good, did you treat us well?" Tortoise said, "I have not done anything wrong to any of you." Tortoise continued to explain, "I haven't done anything wrong to you. You do all know that as we have agreed my name is 'All-of-you,' and all the food they brought was for me" Bird said, "just give me my feather, and I'm leaving right now!" Tortoise, nonetheless, was able to make him agree to convey to his wife and children that they should get soft materials, things like mattresses, to their backyard because he shall be jumping from the sky to the backyard. The Bird thus collected his feather and left. When he reached home he went to Tortoise's home and told his wife that Tortoise said they should collect stones, pebbles, rocks, all different hard materials in the backyard because he was going to use them as soon as he arrives. The family immediately did as they were told. Soon, Tortoise jumped from the sky to his backyard. He ensured that his back landed first. (demonstrating) "GBIM" the sound was so loud, all his back was broken. Since that time up till today, if we all see Ijapa, his back has remained broken, rough and un-smoothed. This is the end of my story.

L-P: Clap for him!

A-P: (clapping)

Folktale (B) 4:

Raufu: Ààlọ o!

A-P: Àlọ!

Raufu: Ààlọ o!

A-P: Àlọ!

Raufu: Àlọ mi l'ori furgbagbo!

A-P: O l'ori kini?

Raufu: May God bless us all.

A-P: Àmin.

Raufu: May our mothers live long!

AP: Àmin

Raufu: It (my tale) is about Tortoise the cunning man, (as if checking to confirm in a note) and Dog. As we have all known it is too much cleverness that kills a clever person. Whatever a person knows, and he knows too much of it, it eventually turns out to be a trouble for that person. It is every time that Tortoise went to steal yams in one farmer's farm. He would dig up some yam, eat some yam, carry some tubers of yams home. Every time he did that, some villagers met him on his way home. One day Tortoise told his friend Dog, (voice changes) "My friend Dog, what I do to avoid hunger is that I have a farm where I go to take some food, I eat there, and I bring some home." Dog asked, "Is it your farm?" He said it wasn't his farm. "Won't we be caught by the owner of the farm?" He said "No we won't." Very early in the morning the following day, Tortoise and Dog went to the farm together. Tortoise carried many tubers of yams but Dog said he would not carry any because what he ate there was enough for him. "It is not (narrator used an English word) "need[ed]" for me to carry yams home (after having the ones I ate)" Tortoise carried a lot of yams, on his arms, his buttock, his back. As they were going home, Tortoise asked his friend to help him carry some yam. Dog said, "No. How do you want me to help you carry some load of yam. You stole them yourself. Didn't have hands to steal some if I wanted to be carrying yams?" Tortoise repeated his request many times, but Dog vehemently refused. He then began a song pleading with Dog, (instructing the audience), you'll say after me, "Gbangbala kogba. "[4] Tortoise sang, "Oh Dog please help me with some load",

A-P: Gbangbala kogba

Raufu: Oh Dog please help me with some load

A-P: Gbangbala ko gba

Raufu: If you refuse I'll reveal (our atrocities) to the farmer

A-P: Gbangbala kogba

Raufu: If the farmer hears he'll tie us down[5]

A-P: Gbangbala kogba

Raufu: Oh Dog please help me with some load

A-P: Gbangbala kogba

Raufu: This is how Tortoise sang and sang, but Dog wasn't moved an inch. When they reached home, the story went round, and Tortoise's secrets were exposed. They arrested Tortoise. Because Tortoise and Dog had been friends for so long, Dog knew what his friend was up to. Soon they sent for Dog to be arrested. Before they came, Dog had put three eggs into the corners of his mouth. As I have said before too much cleverness killed the clever person. Dog knew his friend inside and out. He knew it was coming, whenever Tortoise did any thing wrong, he implicated others so that they can suffer instead his own bad behavior, as if they were the offenders. So Dog divided these three eggs in different corners of his mouth. When they asked Dog to explain his own parts in the stealing of the yams they brought home, he explained that he had been sick for sometime and did not participate in any theft. As Dog spoke, he broke one of the eggs in his mouth (a hand on the narrator's chest, head down, stirs to demonstrate sickness) and "vomited" it out. The judges, the police, all said, "This one isn't well." Tortoise cried, "Oh, it is a lie, we stole them together". Dog said, (voice changed, as if talking with the nose) "Oh my friend, (you know) I have been so sick for about two weeks now. I didn't follow you". He again broke another egg in his mouth, and "vomited" it. As they talked and talked and talked, the judges said to Tortoise, "You yourself have heard what Dog said. It must be that you committed this act alone, and want to unjustly implicate Dog. They told Dog to go free. As Dog turns back to go, he again broke the third egg, and "vomited" it (as if

mistakenly) on the judge's legs. The judges and the police said, "Ah, your sickness is serious. Go home and take care of yourself". So he was freed, and he left the place. They put Tortoise in a big hole and locked him there. He cried and cried there for three days. On the seventh day, he died inside the place he was locked up. This teaches us that too much cleverness kills the clever person. Didn't you see that Tortoise is too clever, and his over-cleverness killed him at the end. For you to accept that my folktale is true, if my mouth does not make three sounds, then say I'm a liar. (uses his right hand to click on the left corner of the mouth) "klik, klik, klik" Clap for me!

A-P (one raising up his hand): (clapping)

Folktale (B) 5

L-P: The person to narrate a tale now is Asana

Asana: Ààlọ o!

A-P: Àlọ!

Asana: My tale is about a senior wife and a junior wife and the king. There is a wood basin, *ọpọn*, that both wives washed regularly. The senior wife is a very jealous wife. She had warned her husband the king not to marry another wife, but the king went ahead and did it anyway. It is the junior wife that washed the *ọpọn* in the morning and later in the evening before going to bed, the senior wife also washed it. This *ọpọn* was so important to the community that whoever dares to break it will be given the death sentence. So one day the senior wife broke the *ọpọn* and secretly put it in the junior wife's place so that in the morning it will be discovered that somehow the *ọpọn* was broken in the junior wife's custody. Early in the morning, it was the senior wife that first woke up, and cried, "Oh come and see what the junior wife had done, she had broken the *ọpọn! The* people of the community took the junior wife and threw her into the

flowing river. One day some old women as usual went to the area to fetch water. So as they went, they started commenting, "This was where they threw (buried) Ilẹ́rẹ́, oh what a pity!" Suddenly a voice responded singing:

Who is calling I Ilẹ́rẹ́

Who is calling I Ọlaregun o

The (senior) Queen broke *ọpọn* and claimed I Ilẹ́rẹ́ broke it

The head of Ilẹ́rẹ́ is in the flowing river

Owner of the flat ears!

(instructing the audience) You'll be chorusing "Kin rin jigbin" Now, "Owner of the flat ears!

A-P: Kin rin jigbin

Asana: Owner of the flat ears!

A-P: Kin rin jigbin

Asana:

Who is calling I Ilẹ́rẹ́

Who is calling I Ọlaregun o

The (senior) Queen broke *ọpọn* and claimed I Ilẹ́rẹ́ broke it

The head of Ilẹ́rẹ́ is in the flowing river

Owner of the animal ears!

A-P: Kin rin jigbin

Asana: So these women said to themselves, "hear what this river voice is saying!" They went to the king and explained what they heard. The king said to them take me there, but be warned that if your story is a lie, I'll give you a death sentence (because this is incriminating the

Queen). When they reached the river, the king asked them to say what they had said there the first time. As they spoke, the voice responded:

Who is calling me, Ilẹ́rẹ́

Who is calling me, Ọlaregun o

The (senior) Queen broke *ọpọn* and claimed I Ilẹ́rẹ́ broke it

The head of Ilẹ́rẹ́ is in the flowing river

You with ears like animals!

A-p: Kin rin jigbin

Asana: Owner of goat's ears!

A-P: Kin rin jigbin

The king said "So that is the truth of the matter." They called upon the senior wife, and asked whether she was the one who broke the *ọpọn*, but she again denied. They brought her to the river to hear the voice's songs. The senior wife's lies thus came to be exposed. The purpose of this is for us not to lie against another person.

L-P: clap for her!

A-P: (clapping)

Folktale (B) 6

Sumela: Ààlọ o!

Chorus: Ààlọ!

Sumela: My folktale is about Tortoise and a boy who is selling *akara*, bean cake. Once upon a time, Tortoise had nothing to eat. He then called the boy and asked him how much he sold a

piece, and the boy told him it was two cowries each. Tortoise then requested the boy to kindly fetch him some water to drink, and the boy quickly obliged him. But before the boy returned, Tortoise already opened the hawking bowl, and ate up all the bean cake, replaced it with his feces, and covered it. The unnoticing boy came back, gave Tortoise water and carried his cake container and went on hawking. Soon someone called the boy to buy some bean cake, but as soon as the boy attempted to open the container, smell overpowered the whole place and the customer just ran away. Then another ran away, and then another. The boy realized some terrible thing had happened. Because the boy sounded surprised one customer asked him where he had stopped, and wasn't surprised when the boy told him he had stopped to fetch water for Tortoise, he knew Tortoise very well as a mischief maker. Soon the King heard about the story and ordered Tortoise and the boy to be brought to him. Tortoise could not deny his atrocities. He said he didn't really care for any punishment, including death. He told them, "If you want to kill me just put me in a hot *asaro*, smashed yam, and I will die instantly." The King hearing that ordered that a hot smashed *asaro* be made, and he said Tortoise should be cast inside as a punishment. But to every person's surprise, Tortoise ate up all the *asaro* and came out unhurt! The King ordered his arrest again, and as they were thinking what to do with him, he quickly suggested again, "If you want to really kill me this time, just cast me inside a meltingly hot iron-pot of beans. I'll die instantly". The king gave in again to Tortoise's suggestion, but Tortoise ended up eating all the beans and coming out unhurt! This goes on for sometime, then came a woman selling *adiagbon*, coconut oil. She was just passing by when she heard the story, and she decided to see for herself. She told the king, "If really you want to kill Tortoise, buy some coconut oil, pore it inside a container and put the container on fire until the coconut oil is boiling. Put Tortoise inside the boiling coconut oil, he cannot survive it." Suddenly Tortoise began to cry, and curse the woman, "By the grace of God this woman, you will never reach your home because your home will continue to be far away from you." They threw Tortoise inside boiling coconut oil, and he died within minutes. But the coconut oil seller was unable to enter her home. Whenever she thought she had reached her house and wanted

to step her foot on her door, the home would go farther away from her. There is a song being sung for her, (advising the audience) you'll be saying, "ese maa ro'ya".

Sumela: Ile Iya maa jina

Chorus: (clapping) Ese maa r'oya!

Sumela: Ile Iya maa jina

Chorus: (clapping) Ese maa r'oya!

Sumela: Yes, this woman's house, go farther, farther!

Chorus: (clapping) This woman's legs keep swelling up!

Sumela: Yes, this woman's house, go farther, farther away!

Chorus: (clapping) This woman's legs keep swelling up!

This continues to happen for sometime, until the woman could no longer bear it, and fell down completely exhausted, and slept off. However, waking up the second day, the spell on her had vanished and she was able to enter her house. This is the end of my story. My folktale teaches us not to be a cheat, and not to steal as Tortoise did. However, we should also not be too eager to give people up, especially when we ourselves do not take time to find out about the crisis. Although Tortoise was guilty of stealing, next time the person could be innocent! If my bell does not sound three times, then say to me that I am a liar! (He uses his hand in his mouth) Pon! Pon! Pon!

Folktale (B) 7

Mama Waidi (sitting, holding a rosary normally used in Ilọrin in the mosques): Ààlọ o!

A-P: Ààlọ!

Mama Waidi: Àlọ mi l'ori furgbagbo!

A-P: O l'ori kini?

Mama Waidi: It is about a woman and Tortoise. Generally many women like to make fun of Tortoise all the time. Tortoise also made fun of them. This particular woman was very proud that when Tortoise approached her, she said that (narrator changes her voice) "Who is going to marry you this shapeless person, you this ugly person!" So this day, Tortoise called her again, she wouldn't even answer him. He followed her up till the time this woman finally married another person. But Tortoise would still not let it end that way. (asking the audience) You know, we do go to the well to fetch water as married women? This newly wed went to the well to fetch water, she and her co-wife, when they arrived at the well, suddenly the newly wed disappeared! The senior wife started crying. The name of the junior wife is Malajo. The senior wife was wailing, "Malajo! Malajo!" One voice answered her,

Who is calling Malajo there?
If they call Malajo, nothing must respond
Nobody must shake
The big stick near the well has taken Malajo away!

(addressing the audience) You'll chorus, "In all sticks (are) small small". Now, The big stick near the well has taken Malajo away,

A-P: In all, sticks (are) small small

Mama Waidi: The senior wife ran home and was crying, "PLEASE HELP". I cannot find the junior wife, and whenever I called her name this type of song is what I heard." Her father -in-law followed her there and asked her to call her mate. She called "Malajo! Malajo!" The voice again answered:

Who is calling Malajo there?

If they call Malajo, nothing must respond

Nobody must shake

The big stick near the well has taken Malajo away!

A-P: In all, sticks (are) small small

Mama Waidi: The mother-in-law also came there. And it was the same song that she heard. The husband also came, and the story was the same. (a member of the audience called her attention, but she later continued) The husband also called her name: "Malajo! Malajo!" One thing that also happened was that every one there started dancing as the song was sang. They later thought over what they could do. They decided to call in *Ọsanyin*[10] who has two livers. When he arrived, he asked them to call the woman's name and as they called, "Malajo! Malajo!" The voice again sang his song,

Who is calling Malajo there?

If they call Malajo, nothing must respond

Nobody must shake

The big stick near the well has taken Malajo away!

A-P: In all, sticks (are) small small

Mama Waidi: The *Ọsanyin*, instead of solving the problem took to the dancing floor. They asked, "What can we do in this situation. The person we depended upon has taken to the floor!" They decided to call in Ọsanyin that has one liver. When he arrived, he asked them to call the woman, and they did, "Malajo! Malajo!" The voice again said:

Who is calling Malajo there?

If they call Malajo, nothing must respond

Nobody must shake

The big stick near the well has taken Malajo away!

A-P: In all, sticks (are) small small

Mama Waidi: Ọsanyin with one liver said it was the fault of the Tortoise. He said it was the Tortoise that often behaved that way. Ọsanyin then used his side hands to uproot the stick beside the well, and brought Malajo out. This tale teaches that you children should not be too proud that some one is ugly, someone is unfit, shapeless. If a person says this, it often turns out that the man so belittled will become something really important.

L-P: Clap for her

A-P: (clapping)

Riddles (B)

L-P: The next person to give us a tale is Ramata

1.

Ramata (holding a stick in her hand, sitting): My narration is a riddle, *àlọ àpàmọ̀*. Ààlọ o!

A-P: Ààlọ!

Ramata: What is it that enters (jumps into) the river without a sound?

A-P (some hands up): I know it!

Ramata: Lima

Lima: A needle

2.

Ramata: What passed in front of the king's palace without paying homage to the king?

An Audience-Performer (about 4 years old): The rain flood

3.

Ramata (a hand in the mouth): What is it that plays with the king and knocks him on the head?

A-P (hands up): I know it

Ramata: (pointing at an audience-performer)

A-Performer: Shaving or barbing knife

L-P: Now more riddles from another person

4.

Raufu: We searched we found, we searched we did not find. We've never seen its type on earth, never its type in heaven. Who knows the answer?

A-P (hands up): I know it

Raufu: (pointing at an audience performer)

Audience-performer: God!

Raufu: Clap for him

A-P: (clapping)

5.

Sarafa: We're going it faced Ọyọ, we're returning it (again) faced Ọyọ. Who knows it?

An audience-member: A drum

Sarafa: Clap for him!

6.

Narrator-Performer (I don't know his name): The mother is pounding yam, the Dog is dancing. Who knows it?

Audience-Performer: Breast

L-P: *Salli ala nabiyi'l Kareem*

A-P: *SALA LAHU ALAYHi WASALLAM*

L-P: Now, we have narrated different tales, let us give ourselves a very big applause.

A-P & L-P: (CLAPPING)

L-P: The next thing now is for our mothers to pray for us. We shall start from Alhaja (pointing at Mama Waidi). Please pray to God to be pleased with us all, and accept all our prayers. Our (elder) brother that we shall be sending this tape to, what he intends to do with it, may it be successful. His goings and comings, we leave him in the hands of God. May God support him. Please do this prayer for us.

(many of the audience-performers stand up, something seems to have drawn their attention, L-P also beckoning to someone to come over)

Mama Waidi (her rosary on her hands): (the prayers are greeted by a frequent chorus of "Àmin" by the audience) May God accept the prayers as you have listed them. The person we are doing this performance for, as he left us, may he meet us in good health. May God be pleased with him. What he plans to do with this recording, may God make it successful. His goings and comings will be good. May God not make us sad on his account, may he not be sad on our account. We shall be hearing good news about him, and he about us. Please recite Fatiha and Inna a'atayna.

A-P & Mama Waidi: (simultaneous recitation of Quranic chapters of Fatiha--1: 1-7; and Kawthar--108: 1-3.)

L-P (points): Now it's your turn, pray for us.

Mama Mumini (over 40 years old): Salli ala nabiyi Kareem

A-P: Sala llahu alayhi wa salam

Mama Mumini: The person who sent us this message (for recording this performance), and now that we have done it successfully, we're grateful to God. Whenever it gets to him, may it meet him in good health and happiness. He himself will meet us in good health and happiness. Please recite Fatiha.

A-P & Mama Mumini: (simultaneous recitation of the Quranic chapter Fatiha)

L-P: Sheri, now its your turn

Sheri (stands): Salli ala nabiyi Kareem!

A-P: Sala llahu alayhi wa salam.

Sheri: My name is Sherifat Ẹlẹlu. May God accept the prayers. May he meet us well (when he returns home). This Ramadan fast that we've started today with the name of God, may we complete it with gratitude to God.

A-P: Àmin.

Sheri: Please recite Fatiha.

(all recite Fatiha)

L-P: Iya Ramata (Bilikisu)

Bilikisu: (audience greeted prayer with constant repetition of "Àmin") Salli ala nabiyi'l Kareem. May God bless all of you. May we meet in happiness in the name of the Prophet. This Ramadan fast that we have started, may we reap its rewards. In the glory of God, young and

elderly, may God support you all every time, every way. We shall meet again with long life and good health. Please recite Fatiha.

(all recite Fatiha)

Raufu: The person who is going to conclude this prayers, time is far spent, he came here from Ado because of our performance today (some members can be heard laughing because of the joke). As soon as he begins to speak Yoruba you'll realize that he speaks Ado dialect of the Yoruba (another big laughter from the audience). Please pray for us.

The Person from Ado: (started with the recitation from the Quran, also chorused by the audience) God Almighty that made it possible for us to start this performance well, and finish well (some comments from the background), let us say *Alhamdulillahi* ("We're grateful to God").

A-P: *AL-HAMDULILLAHI*

The Person from Ado: (repeat)

A-P: (repeat)

The Person from Ado: We shall thank God on behalf of our brother, Mr. Abdul-Rasheed Na'Allah, whom we nick-named as *alfa na nla, alfa na nla*, meaning that our big alfa, our elderly alfa.

A-P: God be praised (Allahu Akbar)!

The Person from Ado: (some members of the audience heard asking for prayers for "iyawo", the wife) His wife, Alhaja Rahmatallahi, our father's daughter (many audience's interruptions) May God in the name of Muhammad, peace be on him, may God bless where they are now.

A-P: Àmin

The Person from Ado: (prayers greeted by the continued chorus of, "Àmin" by the audience) May God give them peace of mind. All our mothers that are here with us today, (mentioned in Arabic, then translated into Yoruba) 'Ummu'l Khayrun, mothers of good tidings, wives of the

prophet were the women always with young people, the prophet (audience chorus; sala llahu alayhi wasalam) was also always with young people. The first mother, the second mother, the third mother, and all the other mothers, may God not disgrace any of them, in the name of our prophet. The market you're buying for your children may you never lose. In the name of Lilaha ila Allahu.

(a few other recitations, and a simultaneous one to end the performance)

Chapter 5

Theorizing on Identity and Culture Through Oral Narratives

In the previous four chapters, one thing I have focused on, directly or indirectly, is the fact that African oral performance is not only about theory but also about practice, that to understand it and to represent it is not about sitting in an arm-chair and "deconstructing" the text, but about being a part of the performance. I have also made the point, in this work and elsewhere (see Na'Allah, 1997b), that no outsider to African oral performance is ever a critic of oral performance; he remains an academic researcher, a secondary translator, and a passer-by.

However, theory, abstract or concrete, does derive from oral performance as a by-product. But constant theory does not explain oral performance, rather it is performance that composes and explains theory. In other words, there is no place for an extraneous grand theory or mechanism to which performance must fit, and here I am also mindful of Milman Parry and Albert Lord's oral formulaic theory (see Lord, 1960: 5-50) which is a legitimate account of the oral literary traditions of the Homeric type, especially the epic in Yugoslavia, but which I like to describe as a formula about the unformulaic nature of oral performance, especially when Lord declares that no two performances of the same oral epic poetry are the same. My discussions here is not about a rendition patttern of narrative. I have stated in previous chapters that my discussions were beyond the kind of projects excellently executed in seasoned works by Finnegan, Okpewho,

Sekoni, and many others in African, European, and American academia. The current work extends beyond the nature of performance itself to consider how performance signifies the cultural identity of the performer, and the ability of the performer to remain steadfast as a product of the active orality society of his abode. This chapter will, therefore, further highlight the principal directions we have taken in our journey to this port of fresh waters.

The two folktale sessions I presented in chapter 4 affirm the premise that every active orality society, especially the Yoruba, maintains its culture and identity despite foreign forces around it. I do not see how Hausa, Baruba, Nupe, Fulani, Arabic, English, or any of the other cultures in contemporary Ilorin have de-Yorubanized the oral performers we encountered in chapter 4. As stated in the introductions to the two folktale sessions respectively, the first one, which took place in a high school with students of grades 7 to 12, does not indicate any serious influence from Western culture in the oral performances. One's first observation may be: "Well, the performance took place in a Hall, and on desks, not on mats, or in the moonlight." But there is no way the hall played any relevant role in the performance. Apart from the recognition the students gave to their school, through songs and dialogue, as the venue of the performance, there is nothing else in the performance that shows that they are students with reading and writing skills. The performances here are no different from the typical Yoruba oral performance in a village square, in town centers, or at home during after-work relaxation. During the performances, some of the things that stand out to the observer or reader of this work in Session A may include the:

1. dresses of the performers;
2. activities of the lead-performers and the audience-performers;
3. poet and his poetry performance;
4. names of the performers.

In my opinion, none of these elements[1] show the performer as different from a typical Yoruba person in a contemporary Yoruba village in Nigeria. I say "Yoruba village" because, more than the urban areas in Africa, the village is more likely to be accepted by scholars as having minimal Western influence. This performance was done in an urban area. Ilọrin is a capital city of a Nigerian state, with about a million inhabitants (the 1963 Nigerian census that lists Ilọrin as under 100, 000 population--see Nelson, et. al., 1972; and the early 1990s census, have always been rejected by many Nigerians; for more information about Ilọrin and other Nigerian language groups and communities see Schwarz 1965) and many educational institutions including a university, a polytechnic, a college of education, a school of nursing, and many primary and post-primary schools. This performance shows that the Western educational institutions have not detracted from Ilorin's status as an active orality society. Although the school uniform is stricktly enforced in Ilọrin schools, many of the students have decided to wear their traditional dresses over the school uniforms. The lead-performer has an *agbada*, a big gown, made from what seems to be a traditional *àlàárí*[2] stuff. *Agbada* among the Yoruba may be seen as a sign of elder-ship, but also, when combined with the cap the lead-performer wears, it is a traditional symbol of Yoruba affluence. However, it is not only the rich who dress in *agbada* among the Yoruba; the poor person, unless he wins a favor from a rich person who gives him a used one, also has his *agbada* made of *téru* stuff.

Today the Yoruba also make *agbada* from imported materials, like the ones called *gíní* and *ànkárá*. Many of the female performers also wear clothes of these materials, cut in various feminine designs. As a former teacher in an Ilọrin elementary school, I remember times when pupils were allowed to wear their non-uniform dresses, during the end-of-year entertainment, or days when girls went for home economics lessons at what is popularly called "Center." It was a beautiful sight: each child using some of the great local designs their parents made for them. I believe that during folktale sessions in Government High School, Ilọrin, students adopt a method similar to the Ilọrin primary school "Center" day policy. In no small way, the traditional Yoruba dresses the performers wear contribute to the flavor of the folktale performances. For example, it makes the occasional dance of the lead-performer very beautiful.

None of the activities of the performers appear un-Yoruba, despite the fact that the performers are students in a Western school in Ilọrin. Rather than a Western educational influence, through, for example, lessons in Shakespeare, I notice in their acting or speaking a very strong influence from popular Yoruba actors such as Jimoh Aliu and Orișa Bunmi, and from characters such as Akara Oogun, and many others, on the performers, especially on the lead-performer. For some time in Nigeria, especially in Yoruba-speaking Southwestern Nigeria, television stations have broadcast popular Yoruba plays in which cultural issues, domestic topics, and religious ones are acted out. These plays explore strong oral traditions and draw a truely popular audience. More than soccer games, or then any other programs on television, these cultural plays draw the largest audiences among the Yoruba. For example, the manner with which the lead-performer addressed the audience-performers as *Ọmọ mí*--"my children"--the way he

used the oral poet, his reaction to the poet's praise poetry--shaking his head, sitting majestically--and his walking away after the performance, with a lot of candor, saying to the audience-performers, *ẹ ṣéún, ẹ̀ṣéún, ẹ̀ṣéún*, meaning "thanks, thanks, thanks" is very much like Jimoh Aliu's behavior in the play *Irìnkè Ríndò* or *Àrélù*. The use of television among the Yoruba for cultural purposes is one of the ways the active orality society of the Yoruba has adapted contemporary Western technology to suit its purpose. Instead of becoming "slaves" to Western technology, the Yoruba have adapted it to suit their own purpose. In any event, all the performers, lead-performer and audience-performers, behaved as though there was no Western education in the community, or as though they were not themselves students in such a school.

The poet is an interesting addition to Folktales Session A. It is very uncommon to have a poet chant the praise poetry of a narrator or even if the lead-performer at the opening or when the session is in progress as occurred in this session. I cited the lead-performer's interaction with the poet as an influence of Yoruba cultural plays on television. Moreover, the inclusion of a poet in a Yoruba folktale session is very abnormal. However, the poet, also in *agbada* like the session's lead-performer, though without a cap, is able to prove his deep cultural roots. The only instance in which Western culture may have had some serious impact on the performers was when the poet and the lead-performer seemed to be reading from a note. Although referring to a note was not a major occurrence in the performance, it deserves mentioning in the sense that the ability of the performers to read and write had been put into use. However, its importance should not be exaggerated. It is another sign of how Yoruba culture uses new elements without losing its traditional identity. Typically, in Ilọrin oral poetry such as

in the *Dàdàkúàdá* oral poetry performance, the drummer, and a performer called *Bótò* (see Na'Allah, 1988: 99), serve as "reminder" performers and call the attention of the lead-performer to some names of patrons, places, praise poetry, and historical facts. They also correct him whenever he seems to have made some mistake.

Most of the performers in Session A, especially those invited to narrate some folktales, have Muslim names such as Silifa, Mulika, Muhammadu, and so on. This is evidence which shows the performers to be Ilọrin, as Ilọrin is a predominantly Muslim community. However, they have showed that being Muslim does not affect their active orality status, or their Yorubaness. In Session B, the Muslim identity is stronger, and it will be interesting to see, later, whether it affects the Session B performer's Yoruba identity as well, or whether it reduces in any way his ability to explore a richer Yoruba cultural heritage during the oral performance. However, it does not appear to me that this has reduced Yoruba identity. Two principal performers in Session A seem to be non-Ilọrinians: the teacher-advisor, Mr. Dada, who made a brief appearance at the beginning of the recording, and was referred to by the performers during the performance as their teacher, and the lead-performer, Bọwale Kadir. We learn Bọwale's origin when the oral poet refers to him as follows in a praise poem:

> The offspring of ọlọfa majọ
> Who derives his name from the tube of yam[4]
> Fighting it out is the custom of Ọfa.

Ọlọ́fà-mâjọ̀ is a typical praise name of indigenes of a neighboring Yoruba community called Ọfà, about two hours drive from Ilọrin. There is a good possibility that the lead-performer has a strong background from Ọfà.

However, in my opinion, this does not make him more Yoruba than other members of the audience. I am not sure how much influence the students experienced from their teacher, but it is certain that he did not impact their knowledge of folktales or their ability to perform them especially if we remember that the performers here started performing folktales since childhood, at home, then in elementary schools, and now in high school.

Most of what I discussed about Folktale Session A is relevant to Session B, but still there are many differences between the two performances. We can see that the advantage of a home performance, which all the performers in Session A would also have experienced, is a wider audience from many age groups: babies, small children, grown children, adults, and older people. The male population is greater in Session B than in Session A, in which the ration of men to women is one to six. Also, there is more variety in traditional Ilọrin dresses in Session B. No one wore *agbada*, but no performer wore a school uniform either. There were a few *Jalabiya*, many *bùbá*[5], *ìbòrí*, otherwise called *hijab* in Arabic (meaning head scarf), and many other kinds of dresses which we did not see in Session A. The issue of dress is not always important in identifying who is Yoruba in contemporary Nigeria. As an active orality culture, Yoruba culture has nativized many types of dress and today what used to be Hausa and English dress, have attained Yoruba indigenous identification. *Jalabiya*, for example, was given the name *Ọlẹ́ntẹ̀l'áàfa*[6], meaning that the lazy person is walking behind the *Alfa*, usually a Quranic teacher.

The most striking difference between the two sessions is how much each lead-performer explores Islam or Muslim identity as a Yoruba. In the first session, it may be more strongly felt in his last name, Kadir (otherwise called Abdul-Qadir). However, he invokes more Yoruba gods such as

Ọrúnmìlà, Ọbàtálá, and Oodúwà (or Odùdúwà). The lead-performer in Session B, who is a younger brother of mine, is also called Idowu, a Yoruba name for the child born by a mother after she had given birth to twins (one of my mother's twins, Taye, is also in the Session B performance). That name alone is Yoruba since it has direct derivation from what is generally referred to as *Orìṣà Ìbéjì*, the twins' deity.[7] However, it is interesting to note that the lead-performer introduced himself as Muhammad Jamiu Na'Allah, not Idowu, which is what more people call him at home. This may be because the act of introduction is foreign to the folktale session, and therefore he felt he was responding to a formal, non-Yoruba culture requirement, and thus used a "formal" name. In my opinion, the names and the dresses have nothing to do with the identity of the performers as Ilọrin Yoruba. Another interesting point is the way Islam was explored during both the beginnings and the endings of the sessions. Unlike Session A, which invoked Yoruba gods, Session B invoked Allah. But the attitude behind "praying for each other" is generally similar in both instances. One can understand that in Session B, most of the prayers were made for me, their son,[8] elder brother, uncle.[9]

The common thread in the two sessions is the performance of the folktales, *àlọ àpámọ̀* and *àlọ àpágbè*. Of course, each performer brought to the art a personal style, talent, voice, and sometimes even storyline, to each performance, thus making every performance different. However, all the performers in both sessions prove, in my opinion, that orality is much more influential in their lives than any written tradition, and that they are no less Yoruba than any person, be he Ijẹṣa, Ijẹbu, or Ọyọ. From my field experiences in oral literature, and from my personal interaction with undergraduate students for seven years of teaching oral literature at the

University of Ilọrin, Nigeria, I have not seen that any person is more Yoruba than these Ilọrin Yoruba in the folktale sessions. The Ilọrin Yoruba, which is the common form of speech in Sessions A & B, makes what the narrators say clearly understandable to me. As a language with several dialects, it is normal that speakers of other dialects may not understand the Ilọrin Yoruba, since I myself may not understand when an Ijẹṣa or Ẹgba Yoruba speaks. Regardless of the dialects, however, we are all speakers of *Ẹkarọ, Óòjiiré*, "good morning, hope you wake up well (or, did you wake up well?)."

It is obvious why a typical Yoruba is an effective rhetorist in his community after reading the folktale performances in the last chapter. In the video recording, one can see that in Session B children as young as four years old stood up and performed the folktale.[10] There is a Yoruba saying about the Muslim, which is true of the Yoruba when it comes to imparting traditional culture to the new generation: *atí kékeré ní mọ̀lé tií kọ́ ọ́mọ́rẹ̀ l'áṣọ̀*, meaning that the Muslim parent teach his child when the todler is away growing how to recite (the Quran). The idea here is to "catch the child young," so that when he grows up he will be a good representative of the home. Yoruba also say, *látí ìlé láátí kó èṣọ́ r'òdé*, meaning that "it is from the home that one dresses up for the outside engagement." Here I must acknowledge the incompleteness of this translation since *kó èṣọ́ r'òdé* may have a deeper meaning than I am been able to give. *Ẹṣọ* means dressing, but it also means beauty, decoration, and other thing. The idea behind the adage is that a person is better prepared at home to be a good ambassador of his family. A mother will use this adage insisting that her child follow a particular family ethic, so that when the interacts with others outside the home, or when he eventually grows up and becomes more independent, it will not be difficult for him to keep to such family or community values. The

folktale is a way for parents to teach kids morality, and to teach them community values.

While identifying the values of African folktales to the community, Ogunjimi and Na'Allah (1991: 53-4) list the following extensive African folktale functions :

> i. Folktales introduce to children the cultural practices of their society, including customs, institutions, mores, and beliefs of the people.
> ii. They inculcate in children, society's basic philosophy of life.
> iii. They introduce to them the African view about the universe, especially the African cosmology.
> iv. They develop in children the sense of communal responsibility.
> vi. They give children knowledge and skills to solve instant problems and riddles of life.
> vii. They make them develop meaningful psychological and physical traits.
> viii. Because folktales deal with rural and peasant cultures, they expose children to the physical phenomena of their environments. These include the sounds of birds, movement of waters, times of the season, voice of the rain, thunder, etc. Therefore, nature becomes a functional part of the child. The study of nature through folktales prepares children for future profession such as fishing and carving.
> ix. They inculcate in children the sense of social organization and collective sensibility.
> x. They serve as comic relief and provide entertainment and relaxation after the day's hardwork on farms.
> xi. Folktales sharpen the intellect and power of memory of the elderly ones.

At the end of every performance, the narrator-performer tries to summarize the lessons of the narration. This action is a part of the narration or performance itself, and if it is left out, the Yoruba folktale performance is not complete. It is interesting that in Session B, narrator-performers ended each folktale with, *b'ágógó mí ò bárò lémetá k'ésópé ìrò ní mópá*, meaning, "if my mouth gong does not give a sound three times you should call me a liar." In

any case this is part of the fun of the performance: the audience knows that the narrator-performer does not need to justify himself, but they count the sound any way, and they easily forgive him if he misses any or even all three sounds.

My discussions of the folktales in the last chapter focus on some of the issues I consider to be important cultural features of the Ilọrin performances of the oral narratives. More careful scrutiny of the form and content of the tales will show further unique features of the tales. For example, Yoruba folktales have definite opening formulas, *àlọ o*, *ààlọ̀*, and two closing formulas, the first being important to the successful completion of the tale, i.e. the identification of the didactic element(s) in the tale, *àlọ yí kọ́wa wípé ká má maa já'lè* (this folktale teaches us not to steal the property of others). The second closing is the one that virtually every performer in Session B observed, but which none in Session A observed. As I have commented before, it is not important if the narrator chooses to do without saying it, i.e., *bi ágógó mí ò báró lẹ̀mẹ́tá k'ẹ́sọpé írọ́ ní m'ópá*, "if my mouth gong does not sound three times, then say I'm a liar." I think a Yoruba tale can afford to leave this closing case out because again, as I have already said, it is meant only to add to the fun of the performance. Usually the narrator-performer starts from the beginning and moves in his own way and style to the end. He is not bound to follow any person's tale, or to repeat anybody's contents, even if the titles of the tales are the same and the end-of-folktale lessons are similar. Sometimes the narrator may, for any reason, decide to summarize the remaining part of a long performance instead of going through every issue in detail. A good example is the folktale of "Fire and Rain" performed by Bilikisu in Session B. I know the tale very well, and I'm certain I have heard and performed ones that are much longer. Again in Session B there

was a tale titled, *élétè mámárimàmà*, "[the woman] with extremely large lips" which also appeared in Session A: Folktale (A) 4, and which I decided not to translate in Session B. In the Session B performance it is much longer than in Session A, and, above all, its contents are almost entirely different. The woman in Session B was actually rewarded because it was confirmed that she acted out of frustration, not out of malice. She truly believed that the children who came looking at her extremely large lips were there for mischief and that was why she swallowed them up. So she was actually rewarded when she agreed to vomit all of them out alive. The folktales are also of different sizes, some very short, some quite long, some in between. As explained earlier, the narrator-performer has the important responsibility of making the narration enjoyable so that members of the audience, often small children, do not get bored. We see in Chapter 4 how the narrator-performer, and also the lead-performer try to make the tales interesting. Dancing and clapping of hands, are important elements of Yoruba folktales; they help to keep the narrative interesting and keep the audience active. Another important element of content, also necessary in determining the performance format, is the reaction of the lead-performer or narrator-performer during riddles or tale performance when the audience-performer does not know the answer to the riddle, or end-of-folktale lesson. The narrator normally asks the audience to say or call *Kùn-ún-ùn*, and to rub "it" on the failed performer's lips or mouth. We saw this happen in a few performances, such as Session A, Riddle 7. Since this does not happen all the time, the narrator always looks for the opportunity to show his higher intelligence over the audience-performer and he takes full pleasure in this as he then tells the answer to an ashamed (not really too ashamed, since all this is also in fun) audience-member. The performance

does not have to be chronological or linear, since everything depends on the memory and creativity of the performer, on what he considers to be capable of provoking the kind of response he wants from the audience. Still, the narrator generally ensures that he delivers his story lines chronologically, with the first action first, the second action, second, and the third third, and so on.

The folktale characters and other names and domestic elements that appear in Yoruba folktales are very useful in explaining the Yoruba world view. Animal and human characters mix in some tales, while in others only animal characters interact, and some with different kinds of animals, such as Birds, Goats, Tortoises, and some tales even have non-living characters. All characters usually have human behaviors such as speech, thought, feeling, and knowledge of good and evil. It is usually a great challenge for the narrator to change his voice often enough to represent the different characters. Among topics covered in the folktale performances in the two sessions are "the children who would not listen to their mother", "the jealous junior wife", "Kare and his mother", "the Spinster who fell in love with Fish", etc. Among the characters and domestic and cultural items we have in the two sessions are Tortoise, Birds, Fish, Dog, Tree, flowing river, Fire, Rain, Spinster, Elephant, Children, Old Woman, Mother, Father, pot, forest, flood, sharp knives, black pot, and a keg of palmwine. The interaction between all creatures in Yoruba folktales are indications of the nature of Yoruba cosmology. In Chapter 1 we discussed Yoruba beliefs about deities and other supernatural powers. In the Yoruba belief system, any creature is capable of attaining supernatural power. The relationship between the man and the fish, like in Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, is I and Thou, and he respects the Fish and considers him capable of greater spiritual attainment.

For example, among religions and things worshiped, trees, rivers, and many non-living elements which have attained spiritual importance are worshipped. Human beings are deified, regarded as gods, and worshipped. For example, Sango was said to be a former *Alafin Ọyọ*. He had enormous powers and was very beneficial to his people. He thus became a god, and his equally powerful wife, *Ọya*, became a goddess. *Igi-nla*, a big tree in Ifẹ, and Sanpona, a kind of snake, are also highly revered. So when a Yoruba performs the folktales, he is not only being creative and entertaining, he is also demonstrating Yoruba cultural belief and world view.

Even in translation one can appreciate how rich the language use is in folktale performances in Chapter 4. There are many features such as repetitions, proverbs, allusions, and other metaphorical elements. To what degree the English translation is able to retain the traditional features in the original text depends on the translator. It must be said, however, that Yoruba folktale is not poetry, and not meant to be poetic, as I have once stated. The translator carries the duty not to impose a so called "elevated language" on the foreign language text as a translation of the original; except when he is truly translating from a very poetic performance, he must be, in the word of Okpewho (1990b), "faithful" to the performance and the nature of its original language.

However, I must recognize, and will insist on not being misunderstood, that some cultural elements have a tendency to recur among peoples in many parts of the world, and thus attain international patterns or parallels. If only for period-similarities it is interesting to note what a British Missionary, William Henry Collison (1873 to 1894), had to say about native North Americans, i.e., the Haida performances in Canada, close to the end of his career at the end of the nineteenth century:

> It is not a little significant, however, to find how very closely the use of ermine skin by the Indian of the tribe of the Northwest Coast approaches the use of it in the state dresses of royalty and nobility in England. The higher the rank of an Indian Chief the greater the number of ermine skins he was entitled to wear attached to his shikeed, or dancing dress, and hanging from it down his back, in rows of three to six in width. The Master of the robes in the English court is careful that neither the duke, earl, or knight may adorn himself with more ermine skin than is permitted by court etiquette. (see Fowk, 1988:11)

At a time when racism was at its peak, and when the British primitivist view was thriving, it is heartening that another Briton would recognize that Britain had no sole ownership to royalty and royal wealth. The native Indians were more generous and lavish in their royalty's use of wealth. Collison said further:

> And, as it cannot be said that the Indians have adopted the custom from whites, we hesitate to admit that the whites have acquired it from the Indians. We can only recognize in it the similarity of human nature, and admit that here, indeed, the extremes meet in tastes and adornments of the highest civilization and the gay trappings of the untutored Indian Chief. (Fowk, pp. 17 - 18)

Another researcher of native North American folklore, B. S. Hoe, also observed:

> Surveys of ethnic folklore reveal that there are many underlying commonalties of human lives and existence. An interdisciplinary and cross-cultural approach perhaps can delineate those commonalties that link all of us together... (Hoe, 1978: 51)

Whereas some of the folk elements, such as the local dialect of performance, the songs, the dance accompaniment, the dresses, the didactic function of the

folktales, the opening and closing formulas, etc., are unique to Yoruba and to many African tales, a close examination will show several international parallels. It is often the actual performance, the local names, the history, and the language of narration that enable differences to figure strongly and the cultural identity of the performers to show. The abstract tales in themselves (i.e., texts without a performance of them) may only be a repetition of the same stories everywhere in the world.

Yet even in performance there are similarities that exist and which stimulate interesting discussion. Archetypes, according to the school of cultural anthropology (championed by George Frazer) and the school of analytical psychology (spearheaded by Carl Jung) are motifs which are recurrent in human experience, dating back to prehistoric times. They include cultural, physical, psychological, and natural attitudes and patterns in myths, legends, and folktales. Despite what have now been recognized as the shortcomings of those I call "archetype scholars," including psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, some of the points made by these scholars about commonality in human traits continue to recur in contemporary discussions. For example, some of the German classification of folktales as *Mərchen* and myth/legend as *Sage* is similar to Yoruba classification of the same kind of folktales into *Àlọ* and *Ìtan*. In addition, most of the Yoruba tales here can fall within some classifications that Aarne (see also Stith Thompson, *Motif Index of Folk Literature*) identifies in his motif types, from quest motif to jealousy, envy, good and bad, etc. Some warning tales we encountered in Chapter 4 have international parallels. The story of unruly children who would not listen to their parents and end up being punished or regretting their actions is a recurrent feature. Punishment, as a way of getting even with bad characters, is a very strong motif in Yoruba folktales, and it is

unusual for a guilty party to go free in Yoruba folktales, however powerful or highly placed--e.g., king, queen, etc.--the character is. The theme of reward for the good and punishment for the bad is also cross-cultural. Ernest Warren's *Type and Motif-Index of the Folktales of England and North America*, Stith Thompson's *Types of Indic Oral Tales: India, Pakistan, and Ceylon*, Hiroko Ikeda's *A Type and Motif Index of Japanese Folk-literature*, Nai-tung Ting's *A Type Index of Chinese Folktales*, and many other such works from around the world show many kinds of universal attributes.

The trickster figure seems the most popular recurrent motif in folktales; almost every culture has a trickster in their tales. In Yoruba folktales it is often Tortoise, usually called *Ijapa*, or *Alabahun*. His praise poetry among the Ilọrin Yoruba is *Ijàpa tìrokò ọ́kọ́ Yánníbo*, often nicknamed, *ọ́kọ́ Yánníbo*, Yánníbo's husband. As we have seen in the story of Tortoise and the Birds in Session B, he is cunning, and often acts as if he possesses all the cleverness in the world. Diedre Badejo (1988: 6) explains the trickster character thus:

> The trickster is perceived as cunning, malicious, selfish, greedy and deceptive. Consequently, she/he uses wit to further their own ends, to escape responsibility or to dupe another character for amusement. Yet, on rare occasions, the trickster assists other characters or the community in resolving their dilemmas. Irrespective of motivations, the trickster perceives the opponents' weaknesses and uses that information advantageously.

The trickster character in Yoruba mythology is originally traced to Ẹ̀ṣu, the Yoruba god of fate, who is also "a power broker" (Badejo, p. 6) among the Yoruba gods. However, Ẹ̀ṣu is worshipped as a god capable of causing misery and bad luck for human beings, or of misleading human beings to

self-destruction. Ẹṣu is also always able to protect human beings from these troubles. The Yoruba Ẹṣu worshiper prays while offering sacrifice to him: *Ẹṣù má ṣé mi, ọ́mọ́ ẹlòmíran ní ó ṣé*, meaning "Ẹṣu please don't mislead me, go away to another place/person/." Despite his above characteristics, Ẹṣu as a sacred trickster is not seen negatively by the Yoruba worshipper. Among all the Yoruba gods, it is Ẹṣu who inspects "all sacrifices left for his companion deities at the crossroads" (Badejo, p. 5), and whenever any sacrifice is offered to any god, the Yoruba worshiper first calls on Ẹṣu to "inspect" it. Ẹṣu is the "the universal policeman and keeper of the << aṣe >> or secrets of the creation of the world in Yoruba cosmology" (Ibid., p. 4). On the other hand, the Yoruba folktale trickster, Ijapa, while sharing some similarities with Ẹṣu, remains a completely secular trickster, always seen as cunning and over-ambitious. Sekoni (1994) gives fuller explanations about Yoruba trickster tales, their formations, conditions, characters, the nature of their performances, and their sociocultural and literary explorations.

The trickster figure appears in Hausa tales as Spider, *Gizo*, and in the character of *Ananse* in many Ghanaian tales, including the Asante folktales. Coyote is a popular trickster in Native American folktales. Bradley Neufeldt's "Cultural Confusions: Oral / Literary Narrative" identifies local names for many native Indian Tricksters: "Nanabush (Ojibwe and Anishinaabe), Wȩ̂sahkêcâhk (Cree), Wadjunkaga (Winnebago)" (1997: 88). Among African Americans and blacks in the Caribbean, tricksters include High John or Brer Rabbit, Fox, and Ananse, all of whom, as Badejo (1998) emphasizes, possess some non-sacred attributes of Ẹṣu, and can, therefore, be traced to Yoruba (or African) roots. Says Badejo about High John,

> But unlike Ẹṣu, who mediates *between* both worlds, High John mediates *within* both worlds for his companion-slaves. This Afro-American trickster mediates in the ethereal world between its forces and those same enslaved beneficiaries. (p. 5)

What is interesting is that the characteristics of Tricksters from all cultures of the world are so similar that one can easily exchange a character from one culture for one from another. Neufeldt refers to Karl Kerenji as describing the Trickster as "*the spirit of disorder* who introduces chaos to ordered life" (Ibid.). Another description Neufeldt traces to anthropological documentation is particularly relevant to Tortoise in the Folktale (B) 3, performed by Taye, "Tortoise and the Birds". Says Neufeldt:

> In anthropological documentation Tricksters most often appear as liminal figures who fool others and are fooled because that is who they are and what they do. They could not conceive of grand earthshaking designs beyond the immediate appeasement of their hunger. (p. 89)

Tortoise fooled the Birds by making them agree to the name "All of You" while he consumed all the food they brought for all of them, but he ended up with a shattered back since he forgot that the same Birds who lent him their feathers could take them back. Tortoise was himself fooled because the Bird he sent to ask his wife to leave soft materials on the spot he would jump to left him with an impression that the Bird would be truthful about the arrangements of the errand, but changed the message telling Tortoise's wife to gather stones, pebbles, and other kinds of sharp objects instead, and these ended up destroying Tortoise's back.

In many African-American folktales, however, the trickster escapes unhurt, and, which is an abnormal situation, especially if the tales take their

roots from Africa, including from Yoruba culture. For example, in the "Tar Baby" tale, Brer Rabbit refused to participate in digging the well, saying to Brer Fox who invited him, "Oh the devil, I don't need no water, I kin drink dew," and then turned back to steal perpetually from the same well after it was dug. Rather than being punished after he was caught, however, he tricked them again and escaped boasting! The same pattern can be observed in the folktale of "Brer Rabbit and Sis Cow". A Yoruba folktale that seems similar to this can be seen in Folktake Session B6 in Chapter 4. The trickster in that tale, Tortoise, *Ijapa tiroko oko yannibo*, tried to escape punishment, exploring similar witty techniques as Brer Rabbit. Tortoise was however punished for his sin despite all his efforts to escape.

There are a few Yoruba folktales in which the trickster escapes punishments (see Sekoni, 1994). However, a Yoruba folktale that comes immediately to my memory is the folktale about "The Monkey and the Tiger", when Tortoise prayed, *Akoba, adaba, Olorun maje k'ari*, meaning, "Oh God save us from trouble which others fraudulently caused for us, or which we brought upon ourselves." Monkey, who was with him at that time, did not see any reason to respond to Tortoise's prayers with the usual "amen." Tortoise asked him why he did not respond to his prayer but Monkey still did not understand, saying nothing. Unknown to Monkey, Tortoise, on leaving the scene, went home to fry a delicious cake using honey and sweet spices, and then carried them to Tiger, and told him that they were Monkey's feces. Since Tiger had already eaten them, he enjoyed them very much and was thrilled that one of his lesser animals could be capable of passing such delicious feces. Tortoise advised Tiger to insist on having his way with Monkey; otherwise Monkey would not give him what he wanted. Next day Tiger invited Monkey to visit him, and the poor creature went, not without

a clue. He obviously could not satisfy Tiger, who shouted at the top of his voice: *Sun didun*, meaning "pass the sweet feces." Tiger held Monkey by the stomach and all the hot feces Monkey passed were bad in smell and bitter in Tiger's mouth, and this only made Tiger more annoyed. The summary of the story is that Tiger pinched Monkey to death by his ferocious fingers. The Trickster in this tale was not punished; rather the lesson usually identified in the conclusion of the story is that we should always endeavor to chorus "amen" whenever we hear someone pray, because indeed, we can be victims of troubles we ourselves have no part in causing. I still do not see the Monkey story as a parallel to the earlier two African American folktales, not because the African American folktales do not take root in Africa, or even from Yoruba culture (afterall, the Yoruba culture also has similar tales), but because some recent historical facts must be considered to explore its correct interpretations and cultural and didactic values. Says William Andrews in his "The Beginnings of African American Literatures":

> A second great fund of Southern black folklore, the animal tales, tells us much about the slaves' commonsense understanding of human psychology and everyday justice in this world. Although many of these tales explain in comic fashion how the world came to be as it is, many more concentrate on the exploits of trickster figures, most notably Brer Rabbit, who use their wits to overcome stronger animal antagonists. Tales that celebrate the trickster, whether in animal or human form, are universal in human folklorre. Still the popularity of Brer Rabbit in the folklore of slaves attests to the enduring faith of black Americans in the power of mind over matter. The spirit of Brer Rabbit lived in every slave who deceived his master with a smile of loyalty while stealing from his storehouse and making plans for an escape. (p. 141)

Diedre Badejo (1998: 7) also explains the African American trickster, High John:

> He functions specifically for an oppressed people who themselves exist on the periphery of the New World's social order (Edwards: 72-79). More often than not, his deeds result in some form of improved conditions, release or feast for the enslaved community and, occasionally, himself, at the expense of the individual slave-owner. In this regard, High John represents an inversion of Ijapa whose objectives are more self-gratifying and much less altruistic ...

In a paper I am currently working on, I am exploring a sociological, contextual, and historical study of many African-American folktales along the lines suggested in Badejo's above reading of the African American trickster tales. I want to understand, from the African-American experience, the reason why punishment may not be the solution to solving some deviant reactions of citizens who are unjustly treated. I want to know why deviance and unrepentant behavior in some African American folktale characters may mean more than what folklore critics have come to understand, why the weaker folktale character such as Brer Rabbit is also the cleverest and sharpest. Despite all the international parallels apparent in folktales, and I have only examined a few here, and regardless of the folktale components that refuse to conform to some universal forms, the truth remains that cultural elements, history, and performance, are important to an understanding of folktales. Important as the text is, and as crucial as the narrator and the members of the audience are in a folktale session, they must have the performance context and the historical source to rely upon. Otherwise every folktale performance will be without water, without weight for any significant cultural representations. The didactic and cultural functions of the folktales will help me to explicate this assertion further.

In the folktale sessions of the last chapter, the frequent references in Session A to names of Yoruba deities and forefathers have strong historical and cultural significance. Says the lead performer in the Preliminary to Session A:

> OUR ANCESTRAL FATHER ỌRUNMILA, WHEN OUR ANCESTRAL FATHER LEFT HEAVEN FOR THE EARTH, he was speaking speeches ...

The above not only helps us to locate the performers' historical origin or lineage, it tells us also that the performers give him credit for the way they perform the folktale today. In another instance, also in the preliminary session, the lead performer declares: "our father who owns the land where the day breaks into the earth, and we call it *Ile-Ifẹ* today." What he says here, as discussed in Chapter 1, is a very important historical fact among the Yoruba. In other words, it shows that performers of folktales are performing within a clear historical context of who they are, how they see their culture, and what they know they represent. Also, the identified lessons from each of the folktales performed can easily be linked to the cultural and historical belief of the performers in fulfilling their community's socio-cultural expectations on them. For example, the warning tale about a woman and her unlistening children clearly shows the cultural expectations of the children to listen to their mothers and to regard her life experience and parental with respect. The Yoruba have a saying: *bi ọmọde laṣọ bi agba, kole ni ekisa bi agba*, meaning that if a child has as many new clothes as the elderly person, he can not have as many rags or used out clothes as the elderly one." The wisdom behind this is that the elderly person has lived for a long time. He is not poor in age. So if a small child says he's wealthy and can buy many new clothes, the elderly one will tell him that yes, he himself has used many

clothes over the years, and the child cannot surpass that! The used clothes stand for the life experiences the elderly one has acquired over the years, for which Yoruba culture requires the child to respect him.[11] When the child failed to listen to their mother's warning, the consequence for them was enormous: death! They themselves regretted their action as they demonstrated in their song:

> Bọlasade, is dead o
> Ogunsade, is (the only one) remaining
> Kọbọkọbọ, is (the only one) remaining
> We are your children
> We indeed are the unlistening children
> We made our mother cry

The same fate that befell these children befell Kare in another folktale in Session A. The lesson about "sharing" that derives from the folktale on the co-wives in Session A is also significant. Sharing, Communality, and community involvement are so strongly valued in Yoruba culture, just as it is in most world cultures, that the family and the community matter more than the individual. A person fights for or protects the good name not of himself, but of his family and community. Another example is when a woman marries among the Yoruba, she is advised by her parents, in an oral performance called *Ekun Iyawo*, bride's poetry, that she is marrying the husband's extended family and not just her husband, and that *Iyá ọ̀kọ́ rẹ̀ d'ọ̀wọ̀ọ̀ rẹ̀, ẹ̀bí ọ̀kọ́ rẹ̀ d'ọ̀wọ̀ọ̀ rẹ̀, má bá ẹ̀nìkán jà, má bá ẹ̀nìkán b'ínú*, meaning "now that you are going to your husband's house; have regards and a caring attitude for his mother and his relatives, don't fight with anyone, and don't be annoyed with anyone." The idea is to tell her that she is to promote, and not fight against, the communal attitude of the culture, and

they make it clear that the success of her marriage depends on a good attitude to the community. If the bride is going to a polygamous home, they add that *órógún rẹ́ d'ọ́wọ́ọ̀rẹ́* or *Iyálé rẹ́ d'ọ́wọ́ọ̀ rẹ́*, meaning "cooperate with the co-wife or senior wife." Each of the other folktales show a particular cultural, historical, or social value.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

This work has thus far presented arguments for the inherently cultural plurality of the Yoruba. It must be clear, beyond contention I hope, from the preceding chapters, that differences in views and opinions, in cultural practices, or even in religion are not new to the Yoruba. The Yoruba say, *báyi là ń sé níléwa èèwọ̀ ìbòmíràn*, meaning, "'this way we behave in our house,' is an abomination in another house/place !" This shows that Yoruba culture recognizes that not all practices and norms are universal, and a person must be ready to learn all over again when he becomes a guest in a foreign culture. I have also emphasized that the Yoruba orality society, which is very much alive today, operates within sets of cultural values and traditions that have nourishing critical apparatus, such as *Ẹlàlọ̀rọ̀*, for engaging in, understanding, and appreciating literary values. The various examples of Yoruba oral materials that we have discussed show the Yoruba people as holding strongly to their active orality status despite centuries of colonial and post-colonial influence from the West. However, as the Yoruba people have approached the twenty-first century, have they sufficiently explored the advantages of their orality society, its inherent cultural plurality, and the lessons so strongly taught in Yoruba folktales for in confronting the socio-political problems of the multicultural and multilingual Nigeria? One of the reasons for asking this question is that having previously presented the argument that colonial and postcolonial influences have not destroyed the ability of the contemporary Yoruba to know their culture, I want to end this work by discussing how much contemporary

Yoruba elite have reflected in the ethics of their oral culture and applied them to their own lives.

Chapter 4 clearly shows that all Yoruba folktales are didactic, and that every folktale session has, within its narrative process, an identification of the tale's moral lessons. Sometimes folktales end with a discussion of the consequences faced by those who fail to observe the morality lessons, as exemplified by the repercussion faced by an ill-mannered trickster character faces. For example, the Narrator of the tale of "a mother and her three children" in Session A (1) ends the tale in the following Yoruba message, reproduced in Chapter 4 in English translation:

> *Ii alọ mi sọ pe kamaa gbọ si awon obi wa lẹnu. Nkan ti won ba wi fun wa, ka ma gbọ. Ka ma ya ọmọ alayi gbọrọ.*

Meaning,

> The purpose of my folktale is to tell us that we should listen to our parents when they admonish us. Whatever they tell us we should listen to it and work with it. We should not become unlistening children.

The lesson in A (2) as performed in the original Yoruba rendition says,

> *Idi alọ mi sọ wipe ti aba ni nkan ki a maa fi saanu ọmọ lakeji wa, kasi mama s'adanikanjẹ ma.*

Meaning,

The lesson of my tale is that if we have anything at all we should share it with others. We should stop behaving like "eat-alone" people.

The lesson in A (3)

Alọ yi kọwa pe kama maa da iyawa l'oju

Meaning,

It taught us not to be wicked to our mother.

In Session B (6), the Narrator ended the story thus:

Nto kọ wa ni pe ki ẹyin tẹ ba jẹ ọmọ, ki ẹma maa se fari pe," iwọ rederede yi, iwọ bo ti ri yi." Ti eyan balọ wibẹ k'ẹma pe ọkunrin ọhun teyan o fẹẹfẹ gan na ni yo pada wa fẹ yan.

Meaning,

This tale teaches that, you children should not be too proud that some one is ugly, someone is unfit, shapeless. If a person says this, it often turns out that the man so belittled will become something really important and may eventually be the person's husband.

Although I am sure that these important ethics are common among the majority of the Yoruba population, and among most active orality peoples of Nigeria, I am concerned about the degree to which contemporary many

Nigerians, especially the literate elites, have shown them in their behavior. Some of them would not cooperate with their fellow persons unless it was in the exploitation of other Nigerians. To several contemporary Nigerian elites, people who do not share their political, religious, and social linings are "ugly" and "unfit." Rather than move away from Ijapa trickster's individualistic, and greedy attitudes, the more literate they become, the more vigorously they embraced them. Many of them now strangely misrepresent the values of their inherently pluralist cultural upbringings.

Perhaps one thing I may have repeatedly emphasized in the previous chapters was the fact that the Yoruba orality culture focuses on similarities rather than differences when interacting with other cultures, and that it lends itself to a process of ***indigenizing***, through which it ***nativizes*** forms from "sister" oral cultures which may be construed as differences. Since the Yoruba culture already has its own set of pluralistic cultural practices, it would not be correct to think that the "fear" of allowing for more differences "bothers" it. By indigenizing differences, it only permits the basic characteristics of an orality society to take their course. As long as there is an interaction between two orality societies, ***nativizing*** and ***indigenizing*** the sister culture's socio-linguistic forms will always take place within each of the cultures involved. Yet, another point must be clarified. Can we then not assume that by ***nativizing difference*** the host culture is actually emphasizing the different identity of its sister culture rather than the similarities it shares with it? As I have stated before in this work, the emphasis on similarities in oral cultures, and in Yoruba oral tradition, for example, is not a "turning of a blind eye" to the reality that differences exist between cultures and among traditions. By nativizing difference, it is utilizing its strategy for accepting those differences. In other words, it can be said that every orality society

culture has realized that when differences are recognized, but not emphasized upon, let alone over-emphasized, ideas about similarities will become the recurrent features of cultural polemics.

It is my conviction that a ***rhetoric of similarity*** is deeply rooted in Yoruba culture. The logic here is simple. Since the Yoruba culture is inherently diverse, its disparate views, its sub-cultures, and its many religions and worship processes are **united** through emphasis on **(the) similarities** among them. Tension is only logical if a culture as intrinsically plural as Yoruba always beats the drum of differences rather than that of similarities. Perhaps this is a value that the New World multicultural society can learn from the Yoruba active orality pluralist culture.

However, again, I am not as naive as to shy away from the truth that contemporary African elites have played too long by the game of differences which they acquired from their Western learning. For example, I myself has heard from a Yoruba elite, about how different one can be from Yoruba when one belongs to a different political group from the majority of Yoruba, or how un-Yoruba one is for professing a religion, Islam or Christianity, which is not considered a "traditional" Yoruba religion. Contemporary Yoruba elites who think this way are, in my view, re-writing the basic feature of Yoruba logic. I have been told by a member of the Yoruba elite, *órúkọ rẹ̀ yi nàà ní, the problem is this your name*! Perhaps inferring that because my name is *Abdul-Rasheed* (or *Rasidi* as many will call me in my Ilọrin home), an Islamic name after one of the Ninety-nine names of Allah (Al-Rasheed, meaning The Guide, and Abdul-Rasheed, worshiper/servant of The Guide), my Yorubaness is automatically in doubt! If one is out to find differences among the Yoruba, i.e., to do exactly what this Yoruba elite has done, or what Kwame Appiah does among Africans, i.e., Ghanaians,

Botswanaians, etc., one will finish by showing that almost "everything" in the Yoruba folktales in Chapter 4 is not Yoruba; neither the names of performers, nor the Islamic prayers in Session B, nor the few Yoruba sentences introduced with an English word "so" by three of the more than 80 performers (two sessions combined), nor some of the dresses, neither this, nor that. This attitude of Western-minded Yoruba elites will only continue to lead to problems and cause tension the kind of which we have discussed about contemporary New World multicultural societies. Someday it could even be worse! An analysis of difference will easily lead a Yoruba elite to say that an *Ilọrin Yoruba* is not Yoruba, or that some Yoruba are so different from him that he would rather call them by their sub-group names rather than acknowledge them as Yoruba. Unfortunately just as wars caused by ethnic mongering are currently destroying several African countries--Rwanda, Congo, Sudan, Eritrea and Ethiopia--some Yoruba elites in Nigeria have neglected the values of their inherent plurality culture, thereby causing tension in their relationships with other Yoruba, and in many cases, with non-Yoruba Nigerians as well. Needless to say, several elites from other ethnic groups in Nigeria have also abandoned this fine active orality tradition by emphasizing difference. Scholars trying to understand contemporary crisis in Nigeria and Africa would be short-sighted to say that it is a result of a tradition of the so-called constant wars among ancient African tribes!

Since Independence from Britain, Nigerians have fought a Civil War caused by the attempts of Igbo-dominated Eastern Nigeria to secede from Nigeria, and from that time on, Nigeria has seen a succession of military coups in which every army brings in sets of ethnic loyalists to rule with the regime. Military regimes, at local and federal levels, have rule as if Nigeria

was not a multicultural, multiethnic, and multireligious federation where, in an open market, every group explores its great potentials while also feeling like a solid part of the whole.

Perhaps it is this military-take-over of post-independent Nigeria and the discriminatory tradition of successive military administrations that caused many Nigerian elites to begin to abandon the **philosophy of similarities** so clearly inherent in our oral cultures. They would rather see themselves as people different from others, and monopolize political power, often in favor of those who spoke the same languages, or belonged to similar political linings, or attended the same educational institutions as they. This is contrary to the orality values clearly expressed in Chapter 4.

I commented earlier about the marriage of inconvenience that is the colonial heritage of modern African states. I am unsure whether Africans, many decades after so-called Independence from the colonial masters, have become accustomed to the colonial arrangement of a haphazard Westernized statehood, or whether any solution can come from a re-examination of the colonial heritages in Africa, especially the cultural and sociopolitical ones. One thing is certain: African orality has more than enough ethics to show that it does not believe in the current games of "winner-takes-all" which have been very damaging to African peoples' lives. One would think that, having a culture which emphasizes being one's brother's keeper, as we saw in the folktales in Chapter 4, Nigerian leaders, at least those of Yoruba heritage, would be good leaders for their people and work to create a nation in which its oil resourses are used for the cause of peace, environmental balance, and the development of Nigeria and its people. Alas, Nigerian leaders are among the worst in the world when it comes to taking their duties with a sense of responsibility and with love of their people. It seems to me that a typical

Nigerian leader, of any language group, knows his pocket first, and perhaps has no knowledge outside that of that.

Unlike the traditional tolerant attitude of the active orality culture, the practice today among contemporary Africans, Nigerians, and Yoruba is akin to what the Yoruba describe as *b'óbá ó páá, b'òòbá ó jín l'ésè*: meaning that "if you meet him kill him, if you do not meet him hit him on the legs [so that he misses his steps and eventually falls down]." The issue, though, is that most of these behaviors are rampant among elites in various language groups, those who, after their initial oral cultural education through the folk and oral legendary tales and performances at home and in their villages and towns, have imbibed the Western culture of individualism whose preoccupation is more with "what I can get for myself," than with what can the Nigerian nation, or my family or village or city achieve? Many of them have been abroad, and, having been schooled in Western political ideologies, are eager to demonstrate their "strange" expertise in "strange ideologies."

While I was surfing the internet recently for information about Nigeria and reading my messages from the Nigeria discussion listserver, *naijanet*, based in the United Sates of America, I suddenly saw the following piece,[2] written by one netter to others, summarizing the frustrations of the Nigerian people in their efforts to evolve a stable political culture, and proposing solutions to move the country forward:

1.

Hi netters,

Considering the current political turmoil in Nigeria one will ask who is fit to rule Nigeria. In my opinion, the person should have the following qualities and background:

1. The person should be a honest dictator; somebody who will put Nigeria first then himself.
2. Has some respect by all sectors of the country
3. somebody who knows the military well and how to keep them in barrack
4. considered credible and with good leadership qualities based on previous record
5. has not participated in the Babangida-Abacha-Abubakar regimes
6. has to be a Yoruba; to dissuade Yoruba's paranoia about the Northern conspiracy theory
7. a Moslem who will satisfy the majority of Moslem North

In my opinion nobody fits this profile other than RET. GEN. TUNDE IDABONG.

Not long after this piece another netter sent an interesting reaction[3]:

2.

Unfortunately, General Tunde Id(i)bon(g) [sic; really "IDIAGBON"] is a full-blooded Fulani, despite his "Tunde" name. Please check the records.

This is not a commentary AT ALL about your train of thoughts. It is not who rules Nigeria that matters, but what kind of Nigeria should be ruled over. After the events of the past six months, anybody concentrating on who rules Nigeria is deceiving herself.

Best wishes.

The issue emphasized by both writers is the ethnicity of the next president of Nigeria, the first, preferring a Yoruba president and naming a person who, he thought was Yoruba, having two Yoruba names, Tunde Idiagbon, first and last names respectively. But another Yoruba, the second writer, said no, Tunde, from Ilorin, is not Yoruba, he is Fulani. And then a flood of

reactions poured in, and I will share some here before discussing my own comments:

3.

Idiagbon is NOT Fulani. He is Yoruba. He was born in Ilọrin, Ilọrin is a Yoruba township, culturally and historically. Most of all, Idiagbon is a Nigerian. I have more to say on this but I'll wait for you to float another distorted banner[4].

4.

Rash,

This is a warped argument that gets you in a hell hole. Follow this logic and lets see where we get:

Case I (Rashid's)

Idiagbon is not a Fulani
Idiagbon is a Yoruba
He was born in Ilorin
Ilorin is a Yoruba town
Proof: Idiagbon is a Yoruba man.

Case II

Ibrahim Gambari is not a Yoruba
Gambari is a Fulani
He was born in Ilorin
Ilorin is a Yoruba town
Proof: Gambari is not a Yoruba man

Case III

The Emir of Ilọrin is a Fulani

He was born in Ilọrin
Yoruba towns are ruled by obas
Fulani emirates are considered Fulani land
Proof: Ilọrin is not a Yoruba land
Therefore Idiagbon is not a Yoruba man, QED.

You see that your conclusion is utterly false because your premise is equally false. But at least I now know that Idiagbon is Fulani, unless someone tells us otherwise. No pun intended please.[5]

5.

My conclusion is no more warped than any premise you would offer as proof that Idiagbon is Fulani and not Yoruba. What qualifies Idiagbon to be called a Fulani, his heritage? If that is so, then Nigeria has been ruled by a Chadian up until about a month ago. My point is that the reality of our corporate existence in Nigeria has produced the kind of cultural fusion that defies all kind of tribal labeling, the sort that Mr. Aluko seems to be advancing. If you can tell me why Idiagbon can be one and not the other, this matter will come to rest. As far as I am concerned, his primary identity is as a Nigerian.[6]

6.

While I do not want to get into a Clintonian hedging by not being categorical about what Idiagbon really is, I must continue to reiterate my earlier statement thus:

"let us remember that there [are] those whose lived existences have transcended most of our traditional definition of who a Yoruba man/woman is or should be; I call those people Nigerians".

By virtue of Tunde Idiagbon's lived existence, he can be a Yoruba and he can be a Fulani, but he cannot be both at one and the same time, therefore he is a Nigerian. But who really is a Nigerian, if I must ask? This is the question that would break us free from the tribal trap and lead us into a consequent consideration of how we can build structures that will guarantee

equal opportunity for all Nigerians in political, social, and economic life. I do know Idiagbon personally, and as you rightly pointed out, Oniyangi and Idiagbon compounds are not far from each other, but I cannot answer your questions. If you ever have the opportunity to ask Idiagbon himself which tribe he belongs to, I can assure you that his answer will be similar to mine: I am a Nigerian!

As for your other questions regarding [the] Afonja-Emir Issue, the reality is that to a large extent, the polarities you are trying to establish are of largely sentimental value to the people concerned. There are of course, occasional frictions (as there must be) in which people hark back to historical animosities, everyday real-life imperative always finds a large proportion of Ilorin natives acting in concert on issues that are important to the majority.
"Ilorin Afonja enu dun iyo te. N'ijo t'ap'owo t'ap'aso l'apin kurani. Awa l'arikewu s'ola. Afi wala t'ore."
-Many Thanks to Abdul-Rasheed Na'Allah for this Pithy one.[7]

It is interesting that a few of the Nigerian elites involved in this debate helped to confirm some of our earlier assertions about the attitude of some western educated Nigerians. *Tunde* is a Yoruba name that means "a father (that) has come back" (the full rendition of the name is *Babatunde*). Idiagbon, another Yoruba name means, "the area where coconut is planted" (some may translate it as "the bottom-side of coconut"). Yet some Yoruba netters insist Babatunde Idiagbon is not Yoruba because his forefathers were Fulani. The first thread in this "not-a-Yoruba-but-a-Fulani" argument started from a Yoruba netter.

Two other interesting discussions, forwarded to naijanet, about the so-called Yoruba in Northern Nigeria, called for them to return to the South-west because that is where they belonged. For example, Olayemi Olaboye, writing in the *Vanguard* newspaper of 14 September, 1998, in Lagos insists

that Ilọrin and its neighboring Yoruba towns and villages in Kwara State better break their present relationship with the North and return to "our kith and kins in the South-West." He says it is an abomination that Ilọrin Yoruba should belong geopolitically to the Northern Sates. He says further, "Baruten and Kiama councils [presently classified with Ilọrin] should go with Zamfara/Kebbi States while Edu and Pategi councils which are purely Nupes should reunite with their kith and kins in Niger State." [8]

I believe that all the internet contributions I have cited are self explanatory. Discussion among Nigerian elites have now come to the level of who is a Yoruba, or a Nigeria, and who is not. The only consolation one has in Nigeria is that ethnic mongering, myopia, exist mainly among the Nigerian elite. After all, those cited above who are conversing on the internet are examples of a high-tech elite. Still, the majority of Nigerians cannot read and write, and, unless they are told, they will not know what is written in a newspaper in Nigeria, let alone the internet[9]. Sometimes being unable to read and write may be a blessing, for it may save one from the terrible selfish culture displayed by many of the Nigerian elites. I am not recommending perpetual non-literacy for the majority of Nigerians. I am only lamenting the fact that the current Nigerian elite don't care if the poor die hungry, let alone show concern that they lack skills in reading and writing.

Finally, the solution for Nigeria, and indeed for Africa, is perhaps in holding on strongly to its active orality culture in the twenty-first century. It

may be better for the Yoruba and for Nigeria to emphasize the lessons which most of our folktales teach us: largely that we should be our brother's keepers. Remaining an active orality society does not in any way stop technological advancement for a people or a nation. It also has a great advantage for the development of indigenous languages, which right now have been neglected by educators and policy makers.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o's recent thesis,[10] proposing at least proof of competence in an African language as a prerequisite to the granting of any university degree on subjects relating to Africa anywhere in the world is a sound one. He is right in stating that it is ridiculous that a contemporary specialists in areas such as African agriculture (Ngugi cited a Ghanaian example) is unable to interact with the indigenous farmers of his research population, and thus are incapable of passing on to them the great knowledge he has acquired researching their profession, making ineffective what otherwise would have helped them to improve their productivity. People such as these agricultural specialists/graduates eventually are unable to work on the agricultural fields with the peasant farmers, or educate the majority non-literate African farmers about contemporary farming techniques. By retaining African languages, we shall retain African culture, African active orality society, and the values that go with them.

I will end this work with an Ilọrin praise song performed for me by my mother. It celebrates the cultural plurality of the Yoruba and the

multiculturalism of Ilọrin, and it flowers my hope that the Afonja City will continue to flourish in her culturally rich orality:

Ilu dara bayi ò legun

Ẹsin leegun won, ọ́kọ̀ l'oro bẹ.

Afonja de kaya

Afonja de loko

Afonja de lailaha ilallahu

Ẹlẹnu meji a s'eko,

Awon ẹlẹnu m'eji ase'badan,

B'eyan o l'ẹnu mejidilogun

Kole se'lọrin tiwa.

Afonja de lailahailallahu!

Afonja l'ope lojẹran gbigbẹ gẹgẹ bi ọmọ omi

Afonja lailahailallahu

Afonja![11]

A town this beautiful without Egungun

Horses are their household Egungun

Afonja, owner of *loko*

Afonja, no god is worthy of worship except Allah

A person with two mouths can live in Lagos

Those with two mouths can live in Ibadan

If a person has no eighteen mouths

He cannot live in our own Ilọrin

Afọnja owner of "No god is worthy of worship except Allah"

Is it Afonja you're calling, and you're not chewing dried meet like the child of *omi*

Afonja, no god is worthy of worship except Allah

Afonja!

Footnotes

Notes to "Introduction"

[1] I watched a documentary in 1995 during a course on Native American Oral Traditions at the School of Native Studies at the University of Alberta. I think it was about the so-called "Last Wild Indian" in North America (see the book, *Ishi in Two Worlds* (1961)). The white narrator claimed that the Indian person's ethnic group was extinct and that he was the last one alive. But the narrator did all the talking. The Indian person's only language was his silence, yet we were assured he was not deaf. For more on this see Neufeldt Bradley's Cultural Confusions: Oral / Literary Narrative Negotiations in *Tracks* and *Ravensong* 1997)

[2] In this work my use of a masculine 3rd person singular pronoun, he/his/him/himself/, is to be understood as gender-neutral, except otherwise stated within the text.

[3] Bilkisu Ọlọhuntoyin Esùú, for those are her names and *àlàjẹ*, praise-names. It is good to have my mother visiting from Nigeria at the time of writing this thesis, as I am able to ask her questions on this issue and thus have a clearer picture of my childhood.

[4] Wasn't there an old European propaganda about how Africa had been a dark continent, and how African history started with the coming of the Whites to Africa? African Writings in European languages were once classified among European national literatures because they were written in European languages. The assumption was that since these Africans wrote in English, or French, or Portuguese, or Italian, or German, they had lost their identities, and their works could only be European (see Chinwezu, et. al).

Appiah (1992: 7-8) gives many interesting examples of miscalculations regarding alien cultures in Africa, or about the so-called "alienated" African's level of cultural and mental colonization as we shall discuss further.

[5] Ilọrin, Kano, Sokoto, Koko, Yauri, Birnin Yauri, and the suburbs of these communities.

6 My own improvisation in Yoruba and translation into English.

[7] Thanks to my friend, Akin Oyebade, for a short discussion of this Yoruba adage through the e-mail.

Notes to Chapter 1

[1] There are two levels of bale-ship among the Yoruba: the one at the head of the smallest family unit level (i.e., the nuclear family level), where the father is bale, and at the extended family level, where the eldest male member of the extended family is bale and the highest family authority. From here, the Yoruba hierarchical set-up moves to the immediate area level, where mọgaji is head. In Ilọrin, the head of the extended family is also named magaji, i.e. magaji ile, while the area head may be called magaji adugbo (notice the difference in the substitution of [ọ] for [a] in mọgaji). In some communities this person is named as Balẹ. Heads of smaller villages, hamlets, and towns may also be called balẹ among the Yoruba. Ọba is the title used for heads of bigger towns or notably historical Yoruba communities. Several titles are also used, like, Alaafin Ọyọ, Ọọni Ifẹ, Awujalẹ Ijẹbu, Ake Ilẹ-Ẹgba (Abeokuta), etc.

Notes to Chapter 2

[1] Several other publications that can be found on this area in any of the journals of African linguistics.

[2] Personal interview with Alhaji Muhammadu Ndagi Patigi, 9 January 1992. Personal interview with Malam Muhammadu Liman Rogun, 11 January 1992. Personal interview with Binta Ibrahim, 15 January 1992.

[3] We should note that earlier we encountered one Alapini as the head of the Egungun priests. The recurrence of this name here suggests its close association with the myth of Egungun in both Nupe and Yoruba communities. The first Alapini was said to have migrated from Tapa to Yoruba community (see Johnson, *The History*, p. 160).

[4] I am aware of "telepersonal" or interpersonal contact/connections provided on some radio and television stations in Europe and North America, to help people who want to make new friends, or want, for a casual or committed relationship, to establish contact through electronic media. This media works to some extent as some people informed me that they met their girlfriends/wives/husbands/partners through these media. Nevertheless, the electronic-connection has a lot of shortcomings, and fall far short of the advantages of an active orality contact. The Yoruba has an adage, *Oju l'ọrọ wa*, meaning, "face-to-face makes a talk."

[5] This is not to say that every Yoruba king does that in contemporary Nigeria, as some hold more strongly to Islam or Christianity, and would rather follow these religious tenets. The point is that Yoruba culture, by its intrinsic cultural plurality, would have no problem with a person having a different belief.

Notes to Chapter 3

[1] The March 1998 African Literature Association conference at Austin, Texas.

[2] According to Sekoni's footnote (1990: 158), this story originally appears in Modupe Broderick's data, among the stories she collected while she was based at the Bayero University, Kano.

[3]Yoruba lessons are compulsory in all elementary schools in Ilọrin, unlike in high schools, where students may decide not to study the subject. It can be safely said, then, that all elementary school pupils in Ilọrin go through folktale sessions in school throughout their elementary education. In situations where the class teacher is not Yoruba or cannot teach the subject, he often makes arrangement for his pupils to attend Yoruba lessons in another class, and some elementary schools have joint classes for Yoruba lessons.

[4] A great amount of work had already been done on performance techniques of African oral forms; see for example, Finnegan (1970), Ben-Amos (1977), Scheub (1977), Seitel (1980), Ọlatunji (1984), Okpewho (1979, 1990, 1992), Sekoni (1990), Rassner (1990), Ogunjimi and Na'Allah (1991), Na'Allah (1997b), etc., etc.

Notes to Chapter 4

[1] It is not certain to me what the meaning of *kumolu* is. *Iku* in Yoruba means "death." *Olu* means "someone superior," or "head of something," etc. *Ikumolu* could mean "a person who has power to cause one's death." This is only a possibility; however, I have heard it used many times to show that there is always a reason for doing something.

[2] *Rara* is the name of a particular type of praise poetry among the Yoruba. Those who chant it are said to *sun rara*, meaning cry *rara*, or simply, chant *rara*.

[3] This is the Yoruba folktale performance opening formula. It can be more comprehensive, as in Sekoni (1990: 152, translated on page 159), or as short as the one we have in all the performances in this work:

Narrator-Performer: (Here's) a story!
Audience-Performers: (Yes), a story!
Narrator-Performer: My story mounts on *furugbagbo*!
Audience-Performers: It mounts on what?
Narrator-Performer: It mounts on one mother with her three children (or so and so)

Furgbagbo is only an ideophone, "furrr-gba-gba-gba, furrr-gba-gba-gba," a kind of powerful movement of winds or any object in the air or on land, like a moving vehicle on a very rough road. Since *furgbagbo* may stand for a noun here, it may mean a thing that is carrying it up and down.

[4] This is more for the sound than for the meaning. In fact, I do not think the phrase has any particular meaning in Yoruba.

[5] Or "If the farmer hears he'll report us to the law" The point here is not the farmer's own reaction to the theft, but the customary law's. To say, "mù ènia dè"--catch one and tie one up--is an expression of how one loses one's freedom in incarceration, literally it is like "tying one up".

[6] *Ọsanyin* is very popular among the Yoruba as an oracle god with a very tiny voice, and when he is consulted for a vision or for revelation of a past occurrence, he speaks in a tiny voice; usually it is his speech which is

transmitted by the bearer, unless he speaks the language which the client understands. It is often believed that one speaks to an *Ọsanyin* from behind the veil.

Notes to Chapter 5

[1] Any interested reader can view the video recording of the folktale sessions which has been submitted as an appendix to this work.

[2] Two of the most popular Yoruba arts are cloth-weaving and dyeing. *Alari* is a very expensive type of such clothes. There is also *sanyan*, and *aso-ofi*. Cloth weaving and dyeing are among the important occupations of the Ilọrin people.

[3] This is a low-quality cloth, made sometimes from remnants of the cotton plant after the best parts have been picked for high-status clothes.

[4] It is not clear to me why yam appears in this praise poetry. It is either that the people are traditionally known for the planting and eating of yam, like the Ijẹṣa Yoruba, or that it is actually another word, eṣu?, and the translator missed it because of the quality of the video recording. Also, the Ọfa people are very fond of a kind of root food, called *anama*, "sweet potato", also in the yam family. It is called *oduku* in Ilọrin. In any event, this has no impact on the folktale session.

[5] *Buba* is a very common Yoruba sleeve design. It is a simple wear, and men and women both have their own *buba* designs, usually with a round neck, and a short hand.

[6] This name must have come from the initial reaction to the idea of going to the farm instead of spending time at the Quranic school. It may also come from a common sarcasm among younger children, or between Quranic

school-goers and those who prefer to do other things. Ilọrin is noted for biting jokes or pleasant sarcasm.

[7] There are also some oral narratives about the Idowu relationship to twins in Yoruba. This name is gender neutral, just as Táye and Kanhinde, names of the twins, "first to come out (and taste the world's air, touch, etc.) of the mother", and "second to come out" respectively.

[8] Both of my mothers were in the performance: Bilikisu, my mum, and Iya Mumini, my step mum; and both stood up to pray for me.

[9] Words such as "niece," "nephew," "uncle," aunt," do not exist in Yoruba. Because of the nature of relationship in Yoruba tradition, a person is either a father, mother, brother, or sister. For example, my father's brother, is father to me, and my mother's sister or brother is mother or father respectively. My father's brother's child is brother, and his daughter, sister, to me. My brother's children are my children, and I call them "child," i.e., son, daughter; etc.

[10] Since many folktales are not translated into English or transcribed into Yoruba in this work, I strongly suggest, for whoever is interested, to take a look at the performances recorded on video and submitted as an accompaniment to the Ph.D. Dissertation to the University of Alberta. The translation I have made in chapter 4 cannot stand for the true performance of the actual event that one can see on video, neither is the video an adequate alternative to the actual live performance.

[11] There is another Yoruba proverb that recognizes the importance of the young person, and thus requires the elderly one to treat him with a mutual respect: *ọmọde gbọn, agba gbọn lafi da'lẹ Ifẹ*, which means that "the cleverness of both the young person and the elderly person combine to create the land of Ifẹ." Another proverb, *b'ọwọ ọmọ de o to pẹpẹ, tagbalagba*

o wọ kengbe, says that "if the child's hand is not long enough to (help) take something from the roof, the elderly person's hand can also not enter the gourd." The first one uses again the creation story of Ifẹ as a metaphor, and the second one refers to a cultural and domestic item, the gourd, useful as a container of various sizes among the Yoruba.

Notes to Chapter 6

[1] Over the internet, I once read about an event in South Africa in which blacks from America had some friction with black South Africans because, as I understood, the latter claimed that the American blacks behaved as if they had returned "home" to "civilize" the Africans, behaving pompously, and will not being prepared to learn the "local ethics" or subject themselves to indigenous traditions. I am, however, not in a position to know what the exact truth is on this matter.

[2] Abba Zubair "Tunde Idiagbon is my Presidential Candidate" on "Naijanet" (naijanet@esosoft.com) Fri, 17 Jul 1998.

[3] "Mobolaji E. Aluko" on "Naijanet", Fri, 17 Jul 1998.

[4] "Rashid Oniyangi" in "Naijanet", Sat, 18 Jul 1998.

[5] OBI IHEDURU in "Naijanet" Sat, 18 Jul 1998.

[6] "Rashid Oniyangi" "naijanet" Sat, 18 Jul 1998.

[7] Rashid Oniyangi "naijanet" Sun, 19 Jul 1998. It can be observed that this contributor made a reference to my name as an acknowledgement of the Ilọrin praise poetry which I use as a signature in my e-mail messages (and which he cited at the end of his contribution. However, the views he expressed in his contribution are entirely his.

[8] Written by Olayemi Olaboye , and originally appeared on the *Vanguard*, September 14, 1998. Copied from naijanet, 14, September 1998.

[9] Some Nigerians are now linked to the internet in Nigeria, usually in Lagos, through the internet services of multinational companies working in Nigeria, and through some university campuses.

[10] Ngugi made this submission during his keynote speech during the 1998 African Literature Association Conference at Austin, Texas, March 1998.

[11] Bilikisu Na'Allah, 5 August 1998. I suspect that she herself heard the song performed in Ilọrin and has added her own flavor to it.

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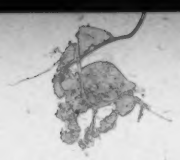

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Appendix

SUMMARY OF FOLKTALE PERFORMANCE SESSIONS, ILỌRIN, NIGERIA, DECEMBER 1997

Two Ilọrin Yoruba folktales sessions were recorded on video in December 1997, and I am providing below their summaries. The video, submitted with this thesis, contains a better detail of the sessions and can be obtained from the Department of Comparative Literature, Religion, & Film/Media Studies, University of Alberta by anyone interested in reviewing it. Chapter 4 of this thesis offers a translation into English of over ninety- percent of the two sessions. What I set up to do here, therefore, is to provide a short summary. Some folktales are identified only in a very few words or sentences. My intention to include this summary in the appendix is to keep a written record of at least the theme of every folktale performed in the two sessions, since some of the tales are not transcribed in Chapter 4. I strongly recommend to anyone interested in knowing more about the tales to access the video, which, although in Yoruba language, is capable of proving the adage that "action speaks louder than words".

Session A

The first session was by members of the *ẸGBẸ ALALỌ*, Folktales Club, at the Government High School, Ilọrin, Kwara State, Nigeria. Mr. Dada, a Yoruba teacher starts by conducting a short explanation of the importance of folktales among Yoruba. The student members number about 55, mostly women. The lead performer (lp), and members of the audience all sit down on benches, the leader and his oral poet in front, and others forming a kind

of semi-circle at the back. Some of the students are in school uniform, some wear Yoruba dresses on top of their school uniforms, the lp and his oral poet wear *agbada*, big gowns. The lp's name is Bọwale Kadir. He starts by describing himself as the "father" --Baba-- of members of the audience, emphasizing on the usual relationship between folktale narrator and the audience among the Yoruba. The group starts with a song about their club:

Dide laa de o, dide laade o
Dide lade ẹgbẹ alalọ, dide laade o
Aa, atunde, ẹgbẹ alalọ atunde,
Aa, atunde, ẹgbẹ alalọ atunde,
Ọkin l'olori ẹyẹ n ba ma n pẹ ninu igbo
Kinihun l'olori ẹran n ba ma n pẹ ninun igbo
Ẹgbẹ alalọ gbede loni o, agberewa de o eee

Here we come, here we arrive today!
Here we come, here we arrive today
Yes here we are, members of Folktale club
Yes here we are, members of folktale club
Ostrich is the king of birds, had I known I wouldn't leave the forest early
Lion is the king of animals, had I know I would have stayed long in the forest
Folktale club, here we come today, here we are with our tales!

After this song, members started coming out one by one to perform folktales. Most of the tales have songs and dance accompaniment and as the narrator dances, the audience clap to provide music. The first tale is about ọmọ alaigboro, children who do not listen (to their parents), who make their mothers cry! After the performance of this tale, the lp leads members in identifying the lessons in the tales, and he does this after every tale is performed. The second tale is about Co-wives, one has children, the other is barren. The third is on Iya Kare, Kare's Mother. Led by the lp, members stood up and danced to the folksongs in the tale. The fourth folktale was about a mother, father and their children. The children were sent, one after

the other, to fetch fire from a woman with an extra-large lips. Here again the lp lead the members in more dancing to the songs.

The lp thereafter reminds the audience about the recent visit of an oral performer called Akàrà Óògùn. He reminds them about the lessons they learnt from the visitor saying some of those lessons are similar to what the folktales just performed taught them.

The lp then declares the performance of riddles, and he himself stands up to begin some riddles. He invites the audience to solve the riddle, and whoever gets the answer right, other members clap for him or her, but whoever gets it wrong, members are asked to say "kun-un" on the person. The following are performed one after the other, as listed below (Translation into English already provided in Chapter 4, Session A (Riddles):

1. Igi Baba mi kan laye laye, igi baba mi kan laye laye, ti aa ba gun igi Ḅaba mi yii atoke laatii gun-un
2. An lọ s'ọyọ o kọju s'ọyọ, atun bọ lat'ọyọ, otun kọju s'ọyọ
3. Ọpa tẹẹrẹ kanlẹ o k'ọrun
4. Kolapa kolẹsẹ won ni ngbọmọ wa o
5. Kolapa ko lẹsẹ n se lobẹ lugbẹ, "ki!"
6. Obi awẹ kan ajẹ d'ọyọ
7. Iya ajẹ bimọ igba ti obimọ tan, ajẹ lo fi ọmọ ọhun bi o
8. Kilo n b'ọba sere ti n kan Ọba n'iko?
9. IKoko dudu f'ẹyin tigbo
10. Kilo n kọja lojude Ọba ti ko ki Ọba?
11. Kilo n b'ọba sere ti n fi Ọba r'ẹrin?
12. Kilo n b'ọba sere tin kan Ọba n'iko?
13. Apata saaa, apata wẹẹẹ, elubọ igbodo ẹyọ kan

After sometime the lp asks members to sing the club's song once again, the *Dide lade* song. The lead performer then conclude the day's performance by saying to them: *Iwa lẹwa ọmọ eniyan*, that character makes a person. That whatever position any person is, he should not look down on others. He

should know his people as his people. He says whether rich or poor, one should not destroy one's personality! He says that is the great message Oduduwa brought for Yoruba from the cradle of creation. He continues with chartings, singings, and asking others to join him, and all other members join him intermittently.

Finally the members sing the closing song:

Ẹjẹ ka re'lee, ile la n lọ,
Agbẹ kan o r'oko r'oko ko gbagbe ile!

Let's go home, home it is we're going
No farmer farms and farms and forgets returning home!

Session B

The second folktale session, which takes place at Ile Oloolu, Ita-Ogunbọ, Ilọrin, with many members of my extended family, my mother, step mother, another middle-age woman (Iya Waidi), brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, etc, starts with a recitation of Islamic prayers for Prophet Muhammad: *Alahuma sali ala sayidina Muhammad, wa ala aalihi wa ashabihi wasallam*. Oh God shower your peace and blessings on Prophet Muhammad, his household, and all those who worked with him! *Alhamddulillahi, Alhamdulillahi, Alhadulillahi Rabbil Alamina*. Thanks are due to God, the Lord of the Worlds.

The lead performer's name is Idowu. He is otherwise called Muhammadu Jimoh Golu, after my grandfather. He starts by praying for me and for the success of the folktale session. He then asks all the members to introduce themselves one after the other. The audience is a mixture of all ages, some as young as one year old, and as old as sixty! Initially, the members of the audience are just about twenty-five, but soon more people

come, and mid-way into the performance, the population rises to about sixty-five! Most of them are sited on benches, a few are standing up, some have their children on their backs, and some carry small babies on their hands. They immediately get down to the folktale performance. Every member, either as narrator-performer (np), or audience-performer (ap), plays very active roles throughout the performances, narrating, singing, clapping, chorusing or listening to the narrator. The lp invites the first member to perform her tale. The first folktale is about a maid who rejected all the community's men's marriage proposals, but went secretly to marry a fish. The second folktale is about a beautiful maiden who is set to choose one between fire and rain, hitherto good friends, who now have to settle on the battlefield. The third folktale is about a boy named Jere, and his mother and father. The folktale that follows that is about a father, a mother and their three children. The next tale is about twins, Taye and Kahinde, who both decide to become professional hunters. The next one is about Tortoise and the Birds attending an annual celebration together. Following that is the tale about seven children and their parents. Following that is the tale about Tortoise and Dog. The next one is about Tortoise and seven Princesses. Following that is the tale about Tortoise and an Old Woman. The next one is about co-wives, the junior wife, and the senior wife, and the King, their husband. Like many previous tales, the tale has a beautiful songs, purported to have been sung by one of the wives:

Narrator:	Tani n pemi Iyẹrẹ, tani n p'emi Ọlaregun o Ti Ilọri f'opọn tan t'olemi Iyẹrẹ ni mo fọ Ori Iyẹrẹ n bẹ ni Ọsa mi agbami oju odo, Eleti ẹwẹlẹ,
Chorus:	Kinrin jingbin
Narrator:	Eleti ẹwẹlẹ

Chorus: Kinrin jingbin

Narrator: Tani n pemi Iyẹrẹ, tani n p'emi Ọlaregun o
Ti Ilori f'opọn tan t'olemi Iyẹrẹ ni mo fọ
Ori Iyẹrẹ n bẹ ni Ọsa mi agbami oju odo,
Eleti ewurẹ

Chorus: Kinrin jingbin!

The next tale is about Marangandan, a mother and her three children, Orukọ, Erin, and Ẹfọn. Following this is a tale about a woman, Oluronbi and a tree, Iroko. Following this is the folktale about Tortoise and a child selling *olẹlẹ*, bean cake. When the folksong accompanying this folktale was sang, like in other tales, the performers clapped their hands, moved their heads, hands, and sometime their eyelids, to the rhythm of the songs:

Narrator: Ile Iya maa jina

Chorus: Ẹsẹ maa ro'ya

Narrator: Ile Iya maa jina

Chorus: Ẹsẹ maa ro'ya

Following this folktale is a tale about a father and his crude and unruly son. This tale, unlike the previous ones, is performed around a song, each time the story extends to the next crude action of the central character, the song is extended to include the most recent occurrence in the story. The unruly child does everything evil, and causes headache for everyone, whenever someone regards something as evil, unacceptable and that he or she would never do, the boy will not rest until he made that person do it without their knowledge, and then he will sing the song, where he tells him or her that he/she has just done what he regards as an abomination:

Narrator: Mo ba Baaba r'oko

Chorus:	Tere
Narrator:	Baba lulẹ o ku
Chorus:	Tere
Narrator:	Iyale j'oju oko rẹ
Chorus:	Tere
Narrator:	Iyawo j'oju oko rẹ
Chorus:	Tere
Narrator:	Iya aladi f'adi mukọ
Chorus:	Tere
Narrator:	Arugbo jẹ'run eri rẹ
Chorus:	Tere
Narrator:	Aafa jẹran ẹlẹdẹ
Chorus:	Tere
Narrator:	Ikun jẹ'su apari
Chorus:	Tere!

Narrator:	I followed (my) father to the farm
Chorus:	Tere
Narrator:	My father fell and died
Chorus:	Tere
Narrator:	The senior wife ate her husband eyes
Chorus:	Tere
Narrator:	The junior wife ate her husband eyes
Chorus:	Tere
Narrator:	The woman seller of coconut oil drank coconut oil in her pap
Chorus:	Tere
Narrator:	The aged woman ate her head-hairs
Chorus:	Tere
Narrator:	The Aafa (Islamic scholar) ate pork!
Chorus:	Tere!
Narrator:	The Ikun animal ate rat meet!
Chorus:	Tere!

The next folktale is about twins and their mother. It is followed by a tale about three children. And following it is the folktale about six children

travelers, one of whom stole and ate up the food (koko yam) belonging to their aged-woman host, and left his stool in the food bowl. An interesting tale, each child denied stealing the yam and so it was decided that every child would swear to his own innocence. They each swore through a song saying:

Child: Tobasep'emi ni moję koko arugbo
Chorus: Alugbirin
Child: Kabęrę so'mi sękę
Chorus: Alugbirin
Child: K'era o rami gara
Chorus: Alugbirin

Child: If I am the one who ate up the aged-woman's koo
Chorus: Alugbirin
Child: Oh let a needle pinch me so deep
Chorus: Alugbirin
Child: Let ants scratch all over me
Chorus: Alugbirin!

The narrator explains that the offender was eventually detected as he ended up having needle pinched him, and ants scratched all over his body! The next folktale is about the King, some children, and a woman with extraordinarily long lips (*elete mọmọrimọmọ*). The next folktale is about a woman and *Alabahun*, Tortoise. It is interesting to know that Tortoise, the trickster, is called by many names, including Ijapa and Alabahun. In this tale the woman regarded most men that asked for her hand in marriage as ugly, but Alabahun, considered the ugliest of all creatures, given the fact that he is hunchbacked, decided to give it a try. It takes many tricks and everyone can trust Alabahun for tricks.

After these sets of tales, then followed riddles, and the following are the riddles performed:

1. Kilob'odo ti o roto!
2. Kilokọja nwaju Ọba tio k'ọba?
3. Kilo n b'ọba sere ti n k'ọba niko?
4. Awaa ao ri, kosi iru rẹ laye, kosi iru rẹ l'ọrun, talo maa o?
5. A n lọ o kọ'ju s'ọyọ, a n bọ o kọ'ju s'ọyọ?
6. Kilo b'ọba jẹhun ti ko palẹmọ?
7. Ọpa tẹẹrẹ kanlẹ o kan ọrun?
8. Oruku tinditindi, oruku tinditindi, oruku bi igba ọmọ o le tiro fun gbogbo wọn?

In conclusion, the lp asked all members to clap for themselves for a successful performance. This was followed with prayers and recitation of some short verses of the Quran, including *fatiha, kulhuwallahu*-ahad (surat'l ikhlas), and *ayatal-kursiyyu.*